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"I'll Listen to Anything But Country Music" The Limits of Musical Omnivorousness: A Study of Listening Preferences at the Root Cellar

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“I’ll Listen to Anything But Country Music”
The Limits of Musical Omnivorousness:
A Study of Listening Preferences at the Root Cellar

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Arts
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Moving to the U.S.A four years ago, I couldn't understand what I was getting myself into. Now that four years have passed, I feel grateful for all the people I have met along the way to graduation.

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ABSTRACT

This research, conducted at a musical safe space called the “Root Cellar”, looks at the recent emergence of a new form of aesthetic preferences, called omnivorousness, that challenges Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of taste as only following an elitist model. This study understands the concept of the *habitus* as something that can evolve with time and social experiences. Moreover, I found that omnivorousness (eclectic taste) isn’t as musically inclusive as past studies have claimed. Omnivorousness is reinforced by technology, with the creation of online music streaming platforms. The mobility and privatization of listening spaces that emerges from technological progress generates new listening behaviors that are still exclusive. Omnivorousness has limits and is constructed of different kinds of omnivorousness. This research concludes by proposing a new understanding of taste, as we should measure musical preferences by what is liked, we should measure it by what is disliked.

It always comes down to taste.
Rick Rubin 2007

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CHAPTER 1:*Introduction*

I was raised with three cultures combined: French, American, and Dominican. Every Sunday, my mom would blast music in the house, letting those who chose come downstairs dance with her. It was never the same music, but most importantly it was never the same experience. I see music as a poetic mirror of total lived experiences. Henceforth, this made me wonder if other people could say the same about their own musical experiences. I knew very well that not everybody was brought up listening to Gloria Estefan, or Celia Cruz, or Charles Aznavour, or Led Zeppelin; my experience made me curious about what others listened to and what that meant about where they came from and how they were brought up.

Are we individually just receptacles for tastes, manners, customs, traditions, rituals, sometimes money, and status from the generations before us? Or are we individually agents of our taste, manners, customs, etc? If the former is true, then why do we subtly judge each other for our tastes that are not our own but rather belong to the generation before? If the latter is true, then why do studies show that class and status influence taste?

In hopes of finding an answer, I turned to Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist who elaborates a theory of taste based on class in *Distinction: A Social Critique of The Judgement of Taste* (1984). His theory links background experiences (i.e., the attitudes and abilities your upbringing has nurtured) embodied in the *habitus* to judgments of taste, such as musical preferences. This project is strongly tied to Pierre Bourdieu's theory and relies on his work in hopes of arguing that, due to the advent of technology and digitized music, his theory should be

modified in light of contemporary conditions. Scholars like Bernard Lahire, Ercilia Garcia-Alvarez and co-authors, have also argued that Bourdieu's theory needs to be reshaped. However, these scholars have not made the same claim that I am making, which is based on an argument that Bourdieu's theory of taste should be modified in recognition of the phenomenon of omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus, 1992). The first ideas of omnivorousness emerged in 1992 with Peterson and Simkus and was then re-explained with Peterson and Kern in *Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore* (1996). This phenomenon is representative of new listening behavior trends.

Listening behavior, when it comes to listening to music, can be understood as appreciative listening (John A. Kline, 1996:34-38). This type of listening behavior, that can change over time, is dependent of three factors:

1. Presentation. It encompasses many factors like the medium, the setting, the style and personality of the presenter, etc. Judging a presentation to be 'good' is strongly subjective. For instance, a person might prefer listening to jazz by a famous pianist in dimly lit bars with a small audience to create intimacy. However, if the presentation of jazz doesn't match the person's preferences of presentation, according to John A. Kline, they won't appreciate the performance as much. However, it is because of our perception of presentation that we can appreciate a performance. This leads us to the second main factor for appreciative listening.

2. Perception. Perceptions, and the expectations or standards¹ that compel them, are founded in attitudes. Since attitudes can change, so can perceptions. Perceptions are also influenced by previous experiences, the final factor of appreciative listening.

¹ These expectations and standards are different depending on the person, and the values and norms that shaped expectation and standard were taught to that person through their class culture, according to Bourdieu.

3. Previous experience. Sometimes, “previous experience prevents us from enjoying a presentation because we are too sensitive to imperfections.” (John A. Kline, 1996:37) Previous experiences encompass past experiences of sounds we were exposed to. In our primary stages of socialization, during childhood, we might have been exposed to certain sounds and music, which gave us pleasant memories or unpleasant memories. The feeling associated with memories will become the ‘previous experience’ which, in turn, will affect our perception, which will affect what we deem a good presentation.

An omnivorous listening behavior should be understood as “the ability to appreciate the distinctive aesthetic of a wide range of cultural forms, including not only the fine arts but a range of popular and folk expressions as well” (Peterson, 2005: 260)

Henceforth, I am looking at what it means to dislike a musical genre and what it means regarding social identity. Note that I am less interested in knowing which musical genres are liked. The reason why I think it is relevant to spend more time looking at what is disliked is that of omnivorousness, a new kind of listening behavior that entails consuming music more broadly. Furthermore, I want to bring forward the idea that judgment of taste both reflects social positioning, but also involves an attack on another’s social position (Williams, 1961).

This senior project originated as a sociological and ethnomusicological study of the relationship between musical preferences and social inequalities. I proposed to use social categories such as class, race, and gender to understand the intricacies of the construction of musical preferences. I thought that practices of judgment of others’ musical preferences are an indirect, subconscious judgment of their class, race, and gender. I hypothesized that these three social factors are intertwined, but my specific interest was in class because Bourdieu based his

theory of judgment of taste on class. I considered it likely that the practice of judging a person's musical preferences would result in the amplification of social inequalities.

My project still advances the idea that judgments of musical preferences are a crucial tool in creating differentiation between individuals and within groups. However, the process of judgment proved different than what I would have expected from Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu lays out the idea that aesthetic judgments follow an elitist standard, but while this had been true for his time, it seems that a more eclectic model of aesthetic standards regarding music, is now more appropriate.

What I mean by eclectic is that people are not tied to specific genres when defining their musical tastes. Instead, people exhibit patterns of aesthetic judgments that reflect omnivorousness. Social positioning occurs when individuals make negative judgments about another's musical preferences. While people's musical preferences are more omnivorous and inclusive, the inclusiveness doesn't guarantee the absence of judgment—since musical preferences are still a way to differentiate people by the intersectionality of class, race, and gender. In the process of judging what is distasteful, a person is distinguishing themselves from the social positioning that is associated with that “distasteful” aesthetic. They remain omnivorous concerning other music genres, but they dismiss and negatively judge the music genre that is in question. I propose that the limits of omnivorousness can be seen at the Root Cellar (a music venue on Bard college campus), showing that the Bourdieusian distinction still operates, albeit in a modified form.

Because an essential foundation for this project is in the work of Bourdieu and the sociology of inequality, I will define the principal terms that inform my analysis. The four social factors that are in focus are class, race, and gender and the intersectionality between these three.

Social class² is a structural and processual sociological notion of categories measured by socio-economic status (income, education, occupation, etc.) where individuals have the mobility to go up or down (Heather Wyatt-Nichol et al., 2011: 189). Social class is also group identities shaped by common, shared experiences (Wright & Shin, 1988). In the Bourdieuan way, and for the sake of this paper, class will be understood as a combination of “class and status”, as Bourdieu was influenced by Weberian conceptions of class. When Bourdieu talks about class culture, he is implicitly incorporating the underlying concept of status. Status and class are strongly tied in 1960s France, which is the context in which he did his research on distinction and wrote his book. Therefore, this paper is not only firmly influenced by Bourdieu on a theoretical level, but it is also strongly influenced on a lexical field³ level.

The myth of the U.S.A is that it is a classless country. Scholarly works such as Nadine Hubbs *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*(2014) demonstrate how the U.S does not follow the same class model as European countries such as France or England. In the American model, class and race seem to influence each other. Because of the surrounding historical context which informed Bourdieu’s research, he did not have to think of race as a variable. For this paper, class cannot solely be understood as determined by income and wealth. It has to take into consideration racial culture and status culture.

Race, distinct from ‘ethnicity’ for social scientists, is the division of the human species into categories. Drawing on “Demonstrating The Social Construct of Race” (1999) by Brian K. Obach, race is a socially constructed characteristic that categorizes people based on visual differences which are imputed to indicate invisible differences. These categorizations are amorphous and fluid over time which reflects their social rather than physical basis. The

² There are many different models of class hierarchy; however, for this project class is understood as 3 sections: upper-class, middle-class, lower-class.

³ “Lexical field” means: the kind of vocabulary that is used.

significance of race arises out of the meanings we as societies assign to it, as well as the way we structure race in our societies.

Understanding gender is about understanding “a way of differentiating sexual practice from the social roles assigned to women and men.” (Joan W Scott, 1986: 1056) In other words, our social world understands gender as binary and associates specific norms and expectations depending on which gender a person chooses; however, gender is a spectrum. The binary understanding of gender comes from a confusion. Indeed, gender, sometimes confused with the term “sex,” deprived of its biological affiliation, indicates the state of being man, woman, both or neither and is a term that is used concerning social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. In “Gender Trouble” (1990), Judith Butler defines gender as a social and cultural construct that is also performative. All these terms, that reference to social factors, are essential in the formation of musical preferences, not only for each individual but for every group that shows shared musical tastes. In his book *Let’s Talk about Love: Why other People Have Such Bad Taste?* (2014), Carl Wilson spends an entire chapter talking about how Bourdieu’s study wasn’t as all-explanatory as it seemed. He argues that other factors should have been considered, such as “ethnicity, gender and regional background.”(100) This explains why for this project I chose to include race and gender to class.

I argue that through the process of judging an individual’s class culture, the one who is judging is setting the grounds for the differentiation of class and individuality. This process of differentiation can trigger negative division. What I mean by negative division is that the process of differentiation is not neutral and is triggered by negative judgments. Therefore, the one who judges, or feels allowed to judge, might inferiorize somebody else’s musical preferences based on musical standards that they observe, which have been given by social dispositions. The

judgment of musical preferences can be compared to a conflict of classes' culture of musical preferences. This conflict will give to somebody privilege and opportunity as it steals from another's privilege and opportunity⁴ (Bourdieu, 1996). Consequently, social inequalities are reinforced. I suspect the intention behind judging one's musical taste is not to reinforce social inequalities; rather, the mere act of using preferences, given by one's given class, in order to set a "standard" creates conflict with others who do not share that same standard (possibly due to differences in same class, race, and/or gender).

Within my ethnographic site, the Root Cellar at Bard College, I move towards a multidimensional model which takes into consideration race, gender, and sexual identity.

1.1 My Ethnographic Site: The Root Cellar

The Root Cellar is a music space on campus that provides various kinds of music performances. The creation of the Root Cellar was considered "campus activism" and is completely student-run. By not being affiliated with campus activities administration or the Student Activities Office, the Root Cellar favors space for students to choose freely who will come and perform. This means that students have the power to influence the musical sphere that Bard accustoms to.

The groups that come to perform are usually groups that are known by other students. The process of deciding which music artists will come and perform is handled by the heads of the Root Cellar as well as circle of students who attend the Root Cellar meeting to give their ideas on which band should be invited. Over the years it has specialized--intentionally or not--in indie, folk, alternative and punk rock.

It's a space that is labeled as a "safe space." In this case, at Bard, the safety of this space has limits because it involves a specific group at Bard, which would be the Lesbian Gay Bisexual

⁴ This is inspired from Pierre Bourdieu's idea of the culturally dominant and the cultural dominee.

Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) community. Also, there are some intersections between the safe space, genre and gender. Indeed, this safe space has a majority of white LGBTQ audience, and the main musical genre that is performed is rock.

The idea behind a “safe space” is that people who are a minority on campus can go there without fear of being judged or harassed. However, under being an acclaimed safe space for one type of community, it limits other communities on campus in whether they can feel safe or not, if they are not part of the targeted community. The “safe space” discussion on campus has emerged with the insecurities the LGBTQ community felt on campus. Thus, the Root Cellar seems like heaven for those who were seeking a space where they could perform their sexual identity. The Root Cellar has this particularity of having a two-sided performativity quality. Indeed, I find there the musical performances, but I also see a gender performance. Being a cultural space, the Root Cellar offers the comfort of liberty of performance. Then again, the whole campus can also be considered a safe space.

The Root cellar is currently run by X, a senior who has fought for the recognition of the queer community and has implemented respect for that minority group. The work of the person who heads it is not in vain; indeed, the Root Cellar has gained some recognition through the past four years for being an emblematic place for certain minorities on campus. However, it does also seem to be an intriguing space because only certain people are inclined to attend, sometimes due to the type of music and sometimes due to the level of comfort they have from attending.

The Root Cellar was created about ten years ago and has never stopped its activity since. It keeps on being a reference for students who want to listen to underground punk rock bands or for bands that are just looking for some gigs and trying to build a reputation. If you go on Facebook, you can find the Root Cellar page where students ask what the available dates for

bands to perform are. Students are free to pick any band they wish to see perform at the Root Cellar as long as the venue has the budget.

1.2 Methodology

This paper lands at the meeting point between theory and ethnographic research. While I found a lot of fascinating literature about my topic of reflection, I also wanted to do some ethnographic work and participant research to understand whether or not all these scholarly works aligned with a place like the Root Cellar. I constructed my research around the audience of the Root Cellar. I divided my research between the ethnographic research and focus groups. I wanted to understand the motivation being part of the audience in this musical safe space. I conducted my ethnographic research by organizing focus groups with people from the Root Cellar. I was able to conduct four focus groups.

My first focus group consisted of three people who had agreed to participate beforehand. This means I met my participants at the music venue. I picked my participants randomly by only approaching those who look like they are waiting, not engaged in a conversation, or enjoying the performance standing in front of the band. While thinking of the model of this research, I endeavored to get a diverse sample within this already self-selected pool that is the Root Cellar at Bard College, which means I was not choosing participants based on gender or racial characteristics even if my environment of research had already narrowed down the chances for diversity. The participants were between 18 and 22 years old.

I placed the group in a circle and played 1-minute snaps of 6 songs that are, according to my Music adviser and I, good archetypal example of genres. After each song, I asked whether they liked the song or disliked it. After their preference was established, I asked them to

enunciate why they had this or that preference. In doing that, I was hoping they deconstruct their opinion by using their analytical skills to explain why one song is more aurally attractive than another. I only told them at the end of the focus group what songs I played for them. This was a preventive way of avoiding any change of opinion that would be induced by knowing or having heard of the artist. I had as little as necessary vocal presence in the talk and gave as much time as possible to the participants to express their thoughts on each song. I recorded our conversation. Methodologically, I planned on having a systematic approach to my focus groups. This means at the end of the first focus group, I went back to the Root Cellar and looked for other people who were interesting in being part of my focus groups. I followed the same process for all focus groups. Time-wise, I kept each of the focus groups to one hour. When we were close to the end, I kept 3 minutes of the focus group to have them fill out a basic demographics information questionnaire.

1.3 A Necessary Disclaimer

The Root Cellar is far from what I first had in mind as a research field site. Indeed, when I first thought of my senior project, I wanted to focus on socio-economic status and musical preferences. Then, during the summer of 2017, as I started my research and was gathering data by interviewing people and doing ethnographic work in New York City's music venues, yet I realized I had to change my focus and approach. Indeed, at first, I was interested in seeing how one's class status influenced their preference in music. What exactly was I looking for? Was I interested in class? Or was I interested in understanding how somebody's musical preferences are built? I was more interested in the latter. This pushed me to reconsider my question. Bourdieu posits a relationship between taste and class, but my question is whether this

relationship holds in the United States: **If the process is different here, what are the social structures that are responsible for reinforcing musical taste?**

I am not the first one to argue that Bourdieu's theory is invalid in different circumstances. In his book *The Sociological Work of Pierre Bourdieu* (2001), Bernard Lahire gives a modern breath to P. Bourdieu's work in light of technological progress and heightened access to different types of arts. Indeed, according to the French Sociologist Bernard Lahire, the *habitus* is not, or is no longer, a system shared by a class, but rather by an eclectic set of dispositions that are often contradictory, due to non-typical socialization paths in late modernity.

I am contesting Bourdieu's work by trying to give it more precision. While what he found was useful, unconventionally approached, acclaimed years and years after, and inspired generations of theorists, that it is not enough to account for the rich ethnographic context that I am trying to understand. In fact, I see this change of approach towards Bourdieu's theory as something that can be explained partially with Jacques Ranciere's critique (1991) of Bourdieu for reinforcing inequalities by presuming it as the starting point of his analysis when he should have.

I believe modern times have shaped Bourdieu's model of taste into something even more complex. If before one could trace back music preferences through class, it is harder to do so nowadays. As mentioned earlier, I am not the first one to make that claim.

I am writing this project because, throughout my specialization in ethnomusicology, certain studies have revealed the myriad of roles endorsed by the listener. Performing a form of musical competence (because listening is a form of musical competence⁵) or *musicking* according to Christopher Small (1987), the role of the listener is something I am intrigued by and

⁵ A study conducted by the University of Amsterdam (2008) has shown that the brain can learn from exposure to different kinds of music; as a result, musical listening begets musical competency.

wish to investigate further. As an extension of this investigation, I question why listeners judge other listeners.

On a more personal level, I am interested in this topic because I consider myself to be intensely musical. My inclination to accessing all kinds of music comes from a particular motivation, shaped by the fact that I come from a multicultural upper-class household. When I first read Bourdieu, his theory of distinction strongly resonated with me (and maybe it also has to do with the fact that we share the same nationality). Bourdieu does not consider multi-cultural identities such as mine as he elaborates his theory based primarily on a singular culture. My upbringing makes me think of Roshanak Kheshti's book *Modernity's Ear* (2015) as we both have similar experiences regarding our multicultural lives. This makes me, under more technical terms, a cosmopolitan, as Kheshti names herself. On this note, music has shaped my life but also reflects where I come from. Bourdieu was not wrong when he asks us to take class culture seriously, but he does not account for the full picture. By not taking into account race and ethnicity, he is unable to account for my household culture.

To give a simple yet accurate definition of Music, we can turn to John Blacking who says, music is humanly organized sound (1974: 3-31). However, I believe that Music is one word that inadequately defines our interpretation of organized sound. John Blacking's definition of Music is restrictive to sounds that might not be interpreted as 'organized' by one person; for example, it might be because of socio-cultural reasons, socio-economic reason, generational reason, etc. This is relevant to the discussion of musical tastes because it proves that where we come from informs what we proclaim as Music.

Inevitably, labeling certain sounds as Music is tied to the capacity to trigger something from within as it can stimulate emotions, or even have a physical impact. Judith Becker (2004)

discusses “deep listening,” listening to a piece of music that would profoundly move you, sometimes to the point where you cry. She also takes a look at the Trancing scene in Europe and the United-States to link the idea of trance to deep listening. One might sometimes feel happy, sometimes feel nostalgic, sometimes feel humored, sometimes feel melancholia, sometimes feel enlightened, and sometimes feel saddened. The list goes on when it comes to what kinds of feeling music can trigger.

Music has that peculiar property of being able to convey information that can be understood through an emotional response. Moreover, by assuming that music conveys information, we can also assume that individuals who listen to music interpret information that is conveyed differently. Our experience of music will never be the same as our neighbor’s because we have a different set of understanding and interpreting what music is. This set of interpretations that we each have can be considered as a set of rules that are formed by the rules we inherited through our environment, through what is exterior to us and defines us, such as our social class, our class culture, our culture.

We tend to forget how much culture plays a role in our approach to life. The way a person from one culture experiences music can be very different from the way another person from another culture experiences music. For instance, Theodore Levin’s incredible and captivating work on Tuvan throat singing in *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing* (2006) demonstrates how Tuvan culture engages with Music and uses throat singing as a way to imitate natural sound; this approach is different from the mainstream idea of what music is in the western world. In other words, imitating sounds of Nature with the voice might seem unconventional in the U.S, but that does not mean it is unconventional everywhere (i.e., Tuva).

The way we accumulate knowledge from music thus varies depending on where we come from. We find ourselves valuing a song for what it provokes within us or for what it means, sometimes in regards to matters of the heart, sometimes in regards to politics or more. From the value we place in a song—WE are the ones who put that value in it since it is bare of value at its premiere form—we create standards, and then we use these standards to guide us by setting judgment on the pool of people who listen to music.

Musical taste or musical preference is not inherent. It is taught, or at least that is what Bourdieu would claim. His claim is reinforced by Kay Kaufman Shelema's work *Musical Communities: Rethinking Collective Music* (2011) by suggesting that the musical preferences of individuals and groups tend to emerge from some combination of “descent” (ethnic, religious, or national affiliation), “dissent” (political affiliation), and “affinity” (personal taste).

Social teachings and family teachings bring us to the cusp of criticism as —and this is only hypothetical—we try to determine whether a person is valuable or not depending on their music preferences. Our standards reflect where we come from concerning social hierarchy according to Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus*, and people might find comfort in thinking that their standards are better than others' standards. Judgment does not come out of anywhere as it must follow a model, a list of standards that we hold as the ‘right’ way to do or think of things. The judgment we use when it comes to judging other people's musical preferences is sometimes unconscious. However, judgment does have sets of rules and judgment cannot happen without a preconceived notion of what is expected. These expectations are ruled by where we come from and how we have been brought up. It is by having musical points in common that our tastes are also reinforced, as we experience a social life and gratification through them.

1.4 Overview

The remainder of this paper is composed of 3 chapters organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents Bourdieu's central theory of Taste from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* as well as existing literature that extends Bourdieu's foundational work in the sociology of Taste. More specifically, I explain how his theory accounts for agency and class. I then tie it to the concept of omnivorousness and how the elitist snobbism have evolved into eclectic inclusion.

Chapter 3 presents all the data I collected for this study during my focus group and ethnographic work. I explain the different opinions my participants had towards specific musical genres and how this could be related to a more profound sense of identity politics, where music is the principal definer of a particular identity (where the identity can take on many different shapes, be "pluralist" in Bernard Lahire's language).

Finally, Chapter 4 proposes that technology, more specifically the use of cell phones along with legal online music streaming platforms and illegal music streaming, reinforces and created changes in the breadth of musical taste. Where Bourdieu did not consider technology, I take impetus from Bernard Lahire's contemporary remodeling of Bourdieu's theory and suggest that technology and consumption trends have transformed the practice of the *habitus*.

CHAPTER 2:

Theories of Musical Preferences

As I explain what the *habitus* is and how it is acted out, specific questions should be kept in mind. Is the *habitus* engrained in all of our actions? What does it mean regarding agency? In light of the *habitus*, how can we interpret having a considerable breadth of musical tastes?

2.1 Definition of the Habitus

The *habitus* is an acquired rule for which a group shares the conscious and unconscious foundations. Also, it is the class you are born, raised, and schooled in that produces your *habitus*; in other words, it is the combination of your home base and your *habits* (which Carl Wilson summarizes as the attitudes, abilities, and expectations your upbringing has nurtured). “The *habitus* is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification of these practices.” (Bourdieu, 1996:170) Indeed, every adaptation of a *habitus* implies the setting in practice of specific codes that are known and shared, understood and accepted, despite the possibility of mistaking the adjustment for deviance. The *habitus* is an immanent law, obtained by social agents through education.

The *habitus* dictates customary practices, which are called habits. The choices that you make happen within the bounds of your *habitus*; these choices can be conscious or unconscious. In order to paint a picture of how thick your *habitus* goes into your practices, Carl Wilson gives a great metaphor: “It’s like a jazz musician improvising on a standard: You can alter the notes and rhythms of the melody, but your improvisation is limited by the tempo and chord changes available in the song.” (2014:92) He gives this metaphor to indicate that the *habitus* does not

fully dictate what you do; however, the *habitus* can be compared to a filter or a frame. Our practices, such as cultural practices are tied to the *habitus* or are framed to fit within its bounds. To decompose the *habitus*, we can look at this four fundamental capitals that, when accumulated, form the *habitus*:

- Economic capital: measures the entirety of the economic resources of an individual, both their revenue and wealth.
- Cultural capital: measures the entirety of the cultural resources an individual has. These resources can have three forms: incorporated (*savoir-faire* et knowledge, competences, forms of elocution, etc.), objectivized (possession of cultural objects), and institutionalized (titles and academic degrees).
- Social capital: measures the entirety of the resources linked to “the possession of reliable network of relations of inter-knowledgment and inter-acknowledgment.”
- Symbolic capital: designates all forms of capital (cultural, social, or economic) that has a particular recognition given by society, such as a degree.

These practices become automatic and impersonal, significant without the intention of signifying. The *habitus* is applied through the “social order,” in a structural way, and is reproduced by each actor that permits its maintenance in a conjectural way. The *habitus* allows the expression of objective intention by the “reactivation” of “lived” intention of the one who accomplishes it. The hypothesis of this reflection appears clearly in Bourdieu’s text. The *habitus* forms a social and cultural heritage that is expressed in daily practices. It forges the individual posture and marks personal condition, as well as social status. It places the person in a given

group, digging the gap between social categories and personal statuses by the adoption of distinct *habitus*.

Bourdieu also goes back to Norbert Elias (1939) for putting in evidence the transmission of *habitus* as a sign of belonging to a social category in a remarkable study concerning the process of civilization. Elias underlines the prestige that results from adoption strategies of *habitus* specific to superior social classes. The *habitus* is the product of “structures” but participates as well in the production of the “structures” that are socially constructed and structuring. There are no individuals who can outgrow these structures.

The example of the “feral child” (Gineste, 2004), Victor de l’Aveyron, illustrates how much these “structures structured structuring” build and allow the individual to express himself/herself. The first of these structures is the *language*. As an acquired skill, specific to a social and cultural context, *tongue* permits the implementation of a human physiological ability: language. Without the tongue, there would be no language, but without the aptitude to language, there would be no speech. Between the tongue and language, the relationship is not in opposition, but rather in “disposition.” Besides, “it is above all thanks to language that the concepts and values of a culture are transmitted from one generation to the next.” (Ingold 2000, p.146) When it comes to the body, for the expression of personality, the *habitus* plays the same role as the tongue for language. Indeed, the *habitus* authorizes the actualization of a performative expression skill, productive of and produced by human society, considered as a whole as well as in all its parts. Henceforth, “the *habitus* of class” constitutes a “disposition system (partially) common to all the products of the same structures” that is reproduced by the production of well-formatted subjects. However, this does not mean that there are more individual differences, but rather that the space for expression from these differences reveals a same category of *habitus*.

In the end, Bourdieu's purpose is to highlight that if the study reveals structures of functionality and restrained social practices, it is most probably because, on the one hand, every individual actualises some possibilities offered by a range of "possibles" for his/her group or social category and, on the other hand, the social order answers to principles deprived of structuration. On the matter of the person and the *habitus*, Bourdieu reaches C. Levi-Strauss's theories concerning systems of social organization as to opposing the diffusionist theses of the existence of a spectrum "possible" answers, of "doable" situations for the human. In this spectrum of the "possible" world, every group effectuates a selection—conscious or unconscious—that authorizes the acquisition of the most suitable understanding of the world in a given situation. The studies do not create the principles of organization of groups, but the studies do reveal the social dynamics developed in determined situations.

By distinguishing the *habitus* from social categories, as principles structuring the cohesion of society as a whole, since in their respective production and reproduction necessitates the adhesion of all the members, implied in relations of complementarity or opposition, Bourdieu puts forth the existence of a global system of *habitus* plural and diversified that is legitimized mutually during each actualization. The spectrum proposed by the system of social organization constitutes a stock of models for the interactions where different people act at each step of their cycle of life. The protocolary codes form a dynamic system known and recognized by each member of the group, shared or specific to each social category that it constitutes in its entirety. The techniques of training transform the human body to let through individual expression. They organize his/her body language. The human body then becomes a social object separated from the body of the animal because of their difference in training/taming. The trained body contains vital forces that are fixed to one human life, subtracted from the clan-like tank of undifferentiated

souls. To them, Bourdieu gives materiality; he is used as an intermediary between his individualization and his socialization. The techniques of the body change according to the space that the person occupies in the social and natural macrocosm, depending on the relationships that are maintained with entities of same nature, the other human and animal living bodies. Henceforth, “actual events of birth and death, therefore, are merely moments in the progenerative process, points of transition in the circulation of life” (Ingold, 2000:143).

Challenging Bourdieu’s theory, Bernard Lahire, in his book *The Sociological Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, sheds light on the topic of *habitus*. His critical analysis helps us argue against Bourdieu or at least paints a clear argument distant from Bourdieu’s first theory. These vital analyses constitute a practical tribute to Bourdieu’s intellectual activity, while at the same time putting his work forward. The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu centers around the idea whereby the role of historical action lies in the relationship of two states of the social, in other words between the objectified history in things, under the form of institutions, and the incarnated history in the bodies, under the form of this system of durable dispositions, named *habitus*. With Pierre Bourdieu, the objectified history takes the form of a spatial vision of society. He explains in the aftermath of Max Weber that modern societies have had their activities differentiated gradually into multiple fields that each have their logic and purpose: economic field, political field, journalistic field, intellectual field, etc. Each field constitutes, according to Bourdieu, a place structured by power plays between the dominated and the dominant, where the individuals fight over the access to the type of “capital” that is valued in a given field (economic, cultural, political, etc.); the “interest” to participate in this or that field does not result in the saving and

accumulation of the same type of resources (the interest of a CEO, of a student, or of a political man aren't the same).

One of the critics addressed, notably by Alain Caille, to the concept of social fields as fields of competition, is that it is tempting to make a utilitarian reduction of social life to a commercial analogy of competitiveness between the individuals and the groups, reinforced by resorting to the notion of interest. This vision too unilateral would make the sociologist blind to other types of relations that are important for social life, such as the relations of cooperations between agents. This one-sided vision would also obscure the existence of different experiences, like friendship, love, or compassion. The case of institutions in constant contact with social suffering (like hospitals, insurances, ANPE —office to help people find jobs, allowances) constitutes, from this perspective, an interesting example. The feeling of responsibility for others and the compassion that is associated to it had a significant place in the daily functioning of these sectors of public action and was partially at the origin of the 'stress' of these social agents. The mere use of the notion of "market" by Bourdieu, as a synonym of the notion of "field," can push someone towards criticism. Indeed, the resort to this lexicon has opened its doors to analysis more clearly utilitarian, for example in some sectors of political science focused on the notions of "political market," of "political enterprise," of "political offers," and of "political profits."

2.2 Habitus or plural identities?

The constitutes the second pillar (the first pillar being all four capitals) of the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu. The *habitus* is what explains why the individuals act in society as per schemes that are pre-existent to them, and in this manner tend to reproduce social relations marked by the domination of some groups over other groups. The *habitus* is, according to

Bourdieu, a system of durable and transposable dispositions in each individual, a mostly nonconscious vector of unity and permanence.

The *habitus* is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. (Bourdieu, 1996: 170)

For Pierre Bourdieu, there are two kinds of *habitus*. There are the individual habituses and the habituses of class. Each individual *habitus* is provided with a singularity, because between two individuals we will never find exactly the same social experiences or in the same order (for example, even kids of the same family follow different academic curriculum). From more global scholastic level, habituses of class can be detected, as far as there are classes of *habitus*, in other words, categories of similar habituses. This similarity (or proximity) can be caused both by similar social conditions (for example, between laborers or between CEOs) and by converging social trajectories (for example, between people coming from agricultural places or laborers who went through university and experience a social ascension by going to school). Essentially, “the *habitus* concept associates orientation of artistic preferences with the deterministic idea of dispositions acquired during the primary socialization stage that then continue to frame all behaviors.” (Philippe Coulangeon, 2003: 124)

Since the 1980's, critics have opposed this unified vision of the individual. A new wave of research has emerged in France around the idea that the social actor is “plural.” While still situating themselves in Bourdieu's wake, authors like Jean-Claude Kaufmann and Bernard Lahire suggest a reexamination of the notion of the. They do not contest that agents internalize

some dispositions through the course of their socialization, but they do question the unity of these dispositions, as well as their durability through the course of life and their activation in all circumstances of daily life. Thus, J.-C. Kaufmann reminds us that the sources from where we take our learnings are various: the family, the school, the work, the media, etc. B. Lahire, in particular, highlights that the family is today rarely a space of homogeneous socialization but is an assemblage more heterogeneous, and for example, “an illiterate father, a sister in college, brothers, and sisters in academic success, and some are failing.”⁶ The people who surround the child embody the relations at school and at work sensibly different, and so a diversity relative with possibles futures, even if the resources from the beginning restrain the probabilities of everyone to rise in the social hierarchy.

In addition, in the course of his/her socialization, the individual lives various experiences: the experience of the daughter or the son, the experience of the comrade in school, the experience of the fan of rap/meloman, the experience of the member of an association, the experience of the colleague, the experience of the worker/precare/unemployed, the experience of the wife/husband, the experience of the lover/mistress, etc. Successive or simultaneous, these apports lodge a multiplicity of “habits of thought” and of “action patterns” and lie deep within the actor, which constitute available “repertoires,” usable depending on the context. This is why the actor can be considered plural. For example, J.-C. Kaufmann highlights that in contemporary societies, the processes of entrance as a couple are laid out usually on several years and are revelatory of a complex of adjustment.

During this process, some eventual elements, contrary to the stock of dispositions acquired by the people, are activated or put to sleep, following the interactions between two

⁶ Lahire shows in *Tableaux de famille* that family is rarely a space of homogeneous socialization, but can on the contrary constitute a space of diverse socialization between a kid and for instance “an illiterate father, a sister in college, brothers and sisters in academic success, and some are failing”.

partners. In this fashion, a young woman can inherit her family education both some dispositions of “good domesticity” and some feminist rejection of having to fit in the mold. Depending on the circumstances and the negotiations with her significant other, this or that of these facets can be activated. The idea of plural actor proposes then a more complex conception open to acquired dispositions, by giving more space to interactions and logic of action. Fewer things appear played in advance in front of the past of each individual. The sociology of the professional identities of Claude Dubar, the sociology of experience of Francois Duver, the sociology of couples and the family of Francois de Singly, the sociology of regimes of actions of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot all have fed, like the works J.-C. Kaufmann and of B. Lahire, this new perspective, which led to the triggering of the too unifying notion of *habitus*.

2.3 *The Sociology of Knowledge*

Bourdieu develops a sociology of knowledge depending on the ones who call it “the practice of” and according to reflexion a minor role. The social determinants of our existence are revealed less in what we think, say or judge than in what our ways of being or living. The sociologist often insists on the trickery characters of our intellectual reflexions and of our discourses and on the importance of our corporal habits as if revelatory of deeper *habitus*. For him, a social practice is first and foremost non-reflexive: for example, to have this or that “lifestyle” (such as developing old-school relationship in the middle popular masses or prefer the strict relations in bourgeois universe) do not result to a thought-through choice, but to a taste (and/or a distaste) deeply rooted in the body. In this practical logic is associated practical knowledge, intuitive, inscribed in the body, a “practical sense.”

2.4 *What status for the agent?*

What P. Bourdieu proposes with his theory of the *habitus* seems almost to excuse people who are considered to have bad taste. If our taste doesn't belong to us but has been shaped by fields in which we have no influence, then we shouldn't spend any time criticizing someone for their 'bad tastes.' According to Bourdieu's theory, we are agentless of our taste. We are bound to our *habitus*; our tastes are structured by the *habitus* that we are bound to. It's almost fatalistic how little to no agency Bourdieu attributes to the individual. Implying that individuals are agentless can start fires. However, this conflict between individual and agency is a recurring discussion. With no surprise, Bourdieu feeds an old philosophical and sociological debate focusing on the rapports/relationships between the reflection and the action. The sociology of action of Bourdieu starts from a critic of intellectualist lectures of action, in other words, visions that tend to reduce the action to the intellectual point of view of the one who observes to the detriment of the practical point of view of the one who acts. The intellectualism would be, of some sorts, like saying that the rapport/connection to the action that a soccer player has is the same rapport/connection that the audience has with the game. It is such an intellectualist slope that Bourdieu even blames on other sociologists the social phenomenology and ethnomethodology, like the theory of the rational action.

The sociologists of rational action, like Raymond Boudon, focalize on the calculations operated by the individuals to make this or that choice. The adepts of phenomenological sociology, like Alfred Schutz, analyze the ways each of us has to interpret daily life. The practitioners of ethnomethodology, like Harold Garfinkel, are interested in the way we dawn on our actions. For Bourdieu, these streams are wrong for attributing falsely to the actor who is

acting an intellectual relationship to the action (relationship of the one who thinks of the action, for example of the one spectator of a game). In doing so, they would settle for universalizing their position of reflecting observant. The actor would not develop the same capacities of reflection than such an exterior observant, because the actor is taken by the urgencies and automatisms of the action.

Moreover, Bourdieu has proposed an epistemology of sociological knowledge, that is to say, a reflection on the scientific status of sociology. In this frame, he distinguishes the spontaneous representations of agents (often illusory) from knowledge established by the sociologist, reaching the truth of social relationships. That is what he called with Jean-Claude Chamboredon and J.-C. Passeron “the epistemological rupture,” in other words a break between the common knowledge (carrier of illusions) and the scientific knowledge (carrier of truth). Whether it is about his sociology of knowledge or his epistemology of sociological knowledge, Bourdieu thus grants little value to how the actor thinks about what he/she is doing or how he/she interpret what he/she is doing.

But isn't the sociology of Bourdieu bending the stick the other way, by only giving to people's reflexive capacities on a residual role? This is the kind of questions that have fed a series of critiques. Bernard Lahire has highlighted that daily practices of writing (list of errands, agendas, notes were taken on the phone, etc.) introduce some reflexion in the depth of the course of action, and this in random situations. It is thus at the heart of the most common, there where for P.Bourdieu the weight of the automatisms of the body appears at its most poignant, that the sociological search detects some reflection. Instead of opposing common action and reflection, B.Lahire helps us discover a reflection of actions.

As an attempt to give an alternative to Bourdieu's theory, L. Boltanski and L. Thevenot both invited the field of Sociology to come out of the debated that opposes the agents of practical sense to the agents of thought through actions. They advise distinguishing different modes of agents' engagement in action, also called regimens of action. Public justification, love, violence, familiarity, strategy, compassion, etc, would be this much regimens of actions, i.e. ways of acting stimulated by certain types of situation (ex: a situation of debate or public negotiations stimulating the activation of a regimen of public justification; the realisation of habitual activities with close ones stimulation the activation of a regimen of familiarity, etc.). However, each of these regimens of actions do not require the same level of reflexion from the ones acting it out (the agents).

We would not need of the same degree of reflexion depending on the situation, and so forth depending on the regimens of action activated. There would be, depending on P. Bourdieu's opposed categories, circumstances more "intellectualist" and situations more "practical." Thus, public justification (for example, in the case of a political or professional negotiation) required a particular work of explanation and argumentation, that goes back to what has been done or what is being done, while relation of familiarity with people or things can sweep into one's routine in such a way that it becomes less intellectualist, less reflexive, less thought through and also automatized. Between the two situations --i.e., intellectualist and practical-- there is variability within the presence of reflexion of the action.

2.5 About Judgment

The judgement of somebody else's music taste is involuntarily a judgement of their *habitus*—in other words it is an involuntary judgment of habits informed by background experiences—as

“the schemes of the *habitus*, the primary forms of classification owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will.” (Bourdieu, 1996: 466) Unless we grasp and become aware of the complexity of our *habitus*, become aware of our dispositions to appreciating certain things because of where we stand on society, we cannot understand the intricacies of somebody else’s *habitus*. Therefore, judging somebody’s class by judging their music taste is far from the world of consciousness and is deep inside subconsciousness. The process of distinction is strongly tied to what ground a person’s *habitus*. As a person’s social identity is defined by different components, which Bourdieu defines as social fields (such as status, network, etc.), a person’s aesthetic tastes also determine their social identity.

The social identity of the subject of esthetic taste has as much to do with expressed distaste for preferences attributed to other social groups, distaste that the subject’s position in the social space of tastes structurally conditions her to experience, as with positive adherence to the preferences of her milieu of origin, for which her dispositions program her. (Philippe Coulangenon, 2003: 125)

One’s capability to make a distinction, in Bourdieusian terms, is premised on a person’s tastes framed by the *habitus*. This leads to questioning if our ‘judgment skills’ are defined by where we come from. This implies we are not fully agent of what we judge, as our judgment, just like our taste, is a mirror of where we come from. “Taste is a means of distinguishing ourselves from others, the pursuit of distinction. And its end product is to perpetuate and reproduce the class structure.” (Carl Wilson, 2014:91) Even if perpetuating and reproducing class structure isn’t intentional, the way we define and hierarchize taste as good or bad, based on our aesthetic standards, symbolizes the reproduction of a structure that has been taught to us. The *habitus* is instrumentalized by class aesthetic standards, and it is through the judgment of others’ *habitus*

that we can also understand our own. The process of distinction is also strongly tied to social identity politics. Distinction can benefit you in what social identity you want people to give you.

Distinction might also demystify Kant's claim that taste always desires other's agreement. Your love of hip-hop or hatred for Celine Dion (or vice-versa) is part of your cultural capital, but it only gains value in the competition for distinction if it is legitimated in the contexts that matter to you. Unlike Kant, though, Bourdieu would say that last thing you want is that agreement be universal: you want your taste affirmed by your peers and those you admire, but it's as vital that your redneck uncle thinks you're an idiot to like that rap shit. It proves you've distinguished yourself from him successfully, and can back in righteous satisfaction. (Carl Wilson, 2014:95)

Our judgment skills start at a very young age, which means the acting out of our *habitus* begins at a very young age too. It is not only deeply rooted in us culturally as it becomes more rooted in us with time, where time is the fertilizer of the *habitus* and judgment of musical tastes. Like Francois Dubet argues at a conference in 2014 Paris Sorbonne, everybody has a set of critical analysis capacity, which then allows people to judge whether one thing is good or not. Moreover, these skills can be put in practice from a young age such as 6-7 years old. The capacity of argumentation is a skill that everybody has and uses the more one has to choose between likes and dislikes. What we judge good and bad must be based on standards, and these standards stem from where and how we grew up. In other words, the way we judge is a performance of standards that are culturally given on the macro level --by society/culture-- and the micro level --by our family/household.

2.6 Taste as Performance

If taste represents a set of aesthetic standards given to the individual, could one claim that having taste in something is equivalent to acting out class culture? Do we perform our class culture through taste--amongst other signifiers of belonging to a class? Bourdieu would agree. As

explained earlier, the *habitus* bounds us to have specific taste patterns that have been predefined by the class one belongs to.

As we delve into what music we like, we might attend a concert. Christopher Small will claim that attending and being part of the audience is as much a performance as the musical performance given by the artist. Furthermore, Antoine Hennion points out in *Music Lovers* (2001) that it is as much a performance to attend a concert as it is to listen to a disc. Indeed, the structure around you might change if you perform taste in a concert hall rather than in your living room. Nevertheless, throwing yourself into what musically satisfies you is as much present in going to see your favorite band perform as it is to listen to their album on a disc. The nuance is in the bodily presence, but we won't get into that in this project.

The idea of taste as performance is a topic that closely relates to this senior project as one can imagine that taste is a performance of one's class culture/artistic standards. The claim of x or y taste is in a way the claim of belonging to a particular group (because that group is the one that passed on these taste values). But, if taste reflects a group we belong to, how do we sociologically understand a person with both highbrow and lowbrow taste?

2.7 Omnivorousness: Broad Cultural Taste

The way that the word "taste" is thought of in this paper goes along the way Bourdieu thought of taste.

Taste is an acquired disposition to '*differentiate*' and '*appreciate*', as Kant says—in other words, to establish and mark differences by a process of distinction which is not (or necessarily) a distinct knowledge, in Leibniz's sense, since it ensures recognition (in the ordinary sense) of the object without implying knowledge of the distinctive features which define it. (Bourdieu, 1979: 466, emphasis added).

Therefore, against the idea of taste as highly personal and subjective, he portrays **taste as this crucial marker determinant of where one stands in society**. (Nadine Hubbs, 2014:3) In fact, “stated music preferences continue to be particularly strong [markers determinant] of social class. Since music is not part of shared school-learned culture in [the U.S.A.], it is an area where we can expect primary groups –family environment, peer group, ethnic community– to have a strong influence.” (Philippe Coulangeon, 2003:124)

In the reshaping of P. Bourdieu’s theory, we have to think of cultural omnivorousness, which goes against the ideal elitist snobbism that P. Bourdieu points at to propose his theory of the *habitus* and distinction. Besides, since Bourdieu claims that “tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgusts provoked by horror or visceral intolerance of the tastes of others” (1996[1979]:56), then what does it mean to have less and fewer distastes? What does it say to find more and more music pieces tasteful instead of having a visceral reaction to them?

The study of cultural omnivorousness by Peterson and Kern (1996) focused on American people. The concept of omnivore/univore blurs the boundaries between highbrow culture and lowbrow culture. Indeed, what the result from their study suggests is “that a historical shift from high-brow snob to omnivore is taking place.” Also, high-status persons shun cultural expressions that are not seen as elevated (Lynes 1954). This contradicts Bourdieu’s theory of taste because, as explained to length in the previous pages with the definition of the *habitus*, according to his perspective, it makes sense to see the lower statuses imitating high-status activities. However, it makes less sense to see the high-status persons indulging in lower status activities. Omnivorousness is conceptualized as a phenomenon, one that became accentuated over time. Indeed, “snobs, characterized by their exclusive taste for highbrow music, were being overtaken

by omnivores, who simultaneously preferred music genres situated inside and outside the field of highbrow music.” (Philippe Coulangeon, 2003:125)

The phenomenon of omnivorousness is defined through strata such as lowbrow, middlebrow, and highbrow. The way they define the lowbrow taste relates to the Root Cellar as they say “that when highbrows are open to non-highbrow art forms, they seek out lowbrow forms created by socially marginal groups (Blacks, youth, isolated rural folk)” (Peterson and Kern, 1996: 901). Therefore, the Root Cellar as being a marginal place fits into the lowbrow culture where highbrow people go when doing non-highbrow activities. This era has more to offer regarding possibilities to be culturally omnivorous.

However, even if this time period makes it easier to be culturally omnivorous, there must be limits to omnivorousness. There must be different kinds of omnivorousness? “Are the omnivorous practices of the upper classes, that is, their extension to cultural practices of the working classes, the expression of postmodernism or the emergence of new forms of distinction (Peterson, 1992; Warde et al., 2007)?” (Caterina Trizzulla, Renaud Garcia-Bardidia, and Eric Rémy (2016): 86)

The shift to omnivorousness (what was trending before was highbrow snobbism) has to be questioned concerning *habitus*. What does it say about where we come from in the social hierarchy? It seems that rather than just looking at where we stand socially, we also need to question how we treat music (listening behavior) and how we listen to it (listening practices). The practices of listening to music have changed as we see platforms like Spotify and Deezer standing their grounds as big audio streaming platforms. These means our “auralities, or ways of listening” (Keshti, 2015: xix) have changed. It can be speculated that omnivorousness as an aesthetic model has an active link to capitalism and the consumerist culture that emerged from it.

The limitation of musical tastes as markers of social distinction is drawn by Holt (1997) who sees the expression of cultural capital as embodied in consumer actions. Because the content of objectified cultural capital has become a relatively weak exclusionary mechanism, research on the association between cultural capital and social divisions should rely less on cultural content and more on consumption behavior. (García-Álvarez, Ercilia, Tally Katz-Gerro, and Jordi López-Sintas, 2007: 421)

Therefore, considering omnivorousness as embedded in consumption behavior pushes us to think about other factors that fueled a shift from the snob, theorized by Bourdieu, to the omnivore, theorized by Peterson and Kern as a modern aesthetic model. Peterson and Kern decompose the change from snob to omnivore into five factors.

The first factor is a structural change, as the elite taste has become more accessible to broader segments of the population. This changed the value placed on arts as markers of exclusion. Also, geographic migration and social class mobility put people holding different tastes in the same group.

The second factor is the change of value where “the change from exclusionist snob to inclusionist omnivore can be seen as a part of the historical trend toward greater tolerance of those holding different values.” (Inglehart 1990; Abramson and Inglehart 1993).

The third factor is the change in the art-world. It became increasingly apparent that the work itself didn't define the value, or the quality, placed on a work of art. The value of a work of art did not inhere from the art itself. The value or quality of a work of art was assessed by the evaluations made by the art world. The realization that value was placed by the art-world onto works of art lead to aesthetic appropriation all around the world.

The fourth factor is generational politics since, beginning in the 1950s, young White people of all classes embraced popular African American dance music styles as their own under the rubric of rock'n'roll. 1960's multi-colored youth culture ("Woodstock Nation") made its

culture a viable alternative to established elite culture, thus, in effect, discrediting highbrow exclusion and valorizing inclusion.

The last and fifth factor is status-group politics. One recurrent strategy is to define popular culture as brutish, and something to be suppressed or avoided; another is to gentrify elements of popular culture and incorporate them into the dominant status-group culture. However, Peterson and Kern's data show there is a significant shift from the former strategy to the latter approach of status group politics.

All of these changes participated in the shift of the foundational model of elitism to an eclectic model. However, while omnivorousness seems to offer a new understanding of a person's relationship with music, this eclectic aesthetic model is not completely detached from Bourdieu's work as "omnivorousness does not imply an indifference to distinctions" (Peterson and Kern, 1996:904). Williams (1961) theorized that the shift from snobbishness to omnivorousness suggest significant alterations in social power relationships.

In light of omnivorous musical taste, the sociologist Bethany Bryson conducted a study in the 1990s focusing on the relations between musical dislikes and social class.

She found that contemporary high-status, middle-class Americans distinguished themselves not by cultural exclusiveness -- for example, listening only to classical music (as in Bourdieu's 1960s)--but rather by cultivating broad, inclusive, often global musical knowledge and tastes. (Hubbs, 2014:3)

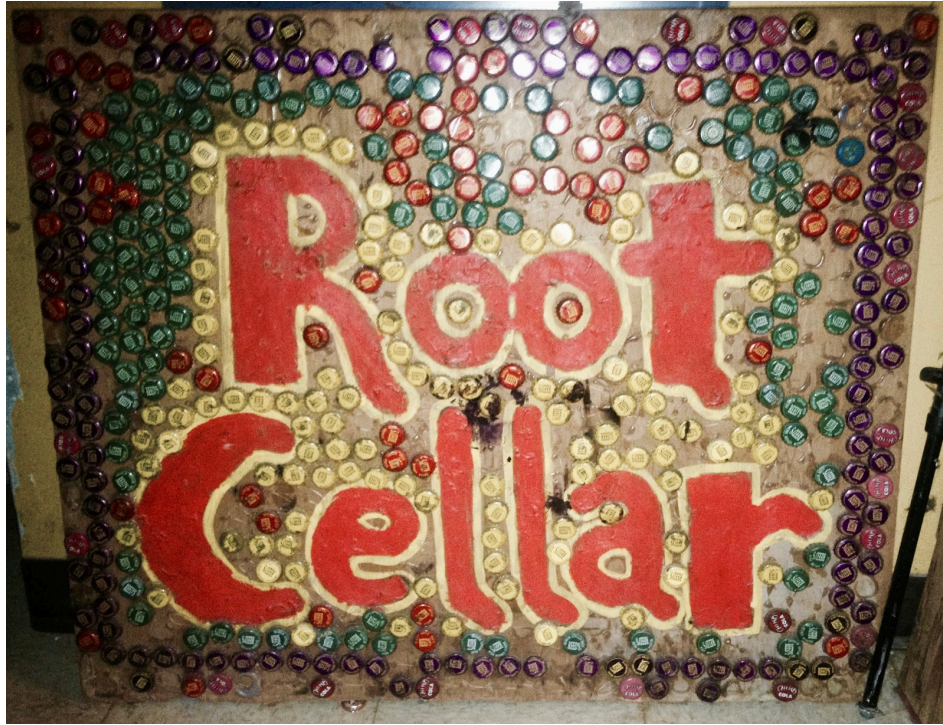
While her research was conducted in the U.S.A and is hardly comparable to Bourdieu's because of cultural differences, it provides a new understanding of aesthetic taste and urges us to only consider broad musical taste as modern version of cultural exclusiveness, but also to reconsider ways of measuring musical taste by looking at what is disliked, for instance.

Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of tastes defines the concept of the *habitus* and the concept of *distinction* as two crucial concepts of cultural legitimacy, to which Tex Sample claimed, "elitist taste legitimates inequality." His claim begs us to question what eclectic taste legitimates.

As a result, while "Bourdieu mapped the correlations of different tastes in music, art, food, entertainment, and other realms to particular social class positions" (Hubbs, 2014:3), other sociologist added nuances to his theory of tastes in order to show that musical tastes have shifted from an elitist model to an eclectic model. This means there was a shift from being musical univores to being musical omnivores. If liking one music genre was a mirror of which class-status culture one belonged to, then what does liking multiple music genres mean sociologically nowadays?

CHAPTER 3:

Research Findings: The Audience at The Root Cellar



Picture 1: DIY Wooden board decorated with caps at the entrance, circling the name of the space “Root Cellar”

For my first ethnographic work there, I spent my nights at the Root Cellar in order to see if this place had an atypical audience. It turns out the people who were attending were either used to the Root Cellar or were there for the first time. A high number of queer people were there and I could not see anybody of color. This music venue seems to attract specific students. Either due to its culture or due to the music performances, there is a lack of diversity in the audience. On Saturday night, there were three artists playing. They all had their own guitars and just sang without any other instrument. Some songs dealt with their personal lives. Looking at the very small crowd, I noticed how it lacked racial diversity. As much as the Root Cellar tries to be inclusive and promote a safe space attitude, it seems to have a very low attraction of people of

color communities on campus. The audience at the Root Cellar was white and seemed to mostly identify queer. In fact, the running joke with some of my friends who went to the Root Cellar was that I am one of the only heterosexual people there. This example might seem a little “light” in terms of convincing argument; however, consider the fact that the Root Cellar’s philosophy and merit is that it is so inclusive of queer people, to the point where heterosexuality is rarely talked about. A heterosexual person at the Root Cellar becomes the minority. I intended to know more about it.



Picture 2: Inside the Root Cellar, facing the wall of collage in process, with “Camp-in” sign above.

The Root Cellar has specific social characteristics that can present it as a self-selected environment. It is a space where popular music idioms, usually largely dominated by

heterosexuality, can be re-articulated into a new sexual identity. Another way to name this space is “the Camp-in” (see Picture 2), referring to camp culture—in simple terms, a gay masculine subculture. The Root Cellar does not openly advertise that it is an “LGBTQ community”; however, the gender and sexual identity associated with the space strongly resonates through the kinds of music that play there. In addition, the space has under-recognized whiteness social characteristic.

The sexual and gender identity might have to do with the safe space philosophy. The concept of safe space governs and shapes the environment in such a way that it is more natural to have a stronger attendance of those who are looking for that safety. The safe space is there to create a “positive climate” (Fassinger 1995). This could mean the climate wasn’t as inclined to reinforcing positivity before the safe space was created. Some minor communities might have felt out of place and unprotected facing the majority.

On a foundational level, a safe place requires physical safety, a learning environment free from violence that allows educational experiences (Goldstein, 2005). Beyond physical violence and verbal threats, a safe place can refer to inclusive groups of learners, students who may be underrepresented based upon race, sexuality, religion, nationality, or ideology. (Barbara Mae Gayle Dr, Derek Cortez, Raymond W. Preiss, 2013)

This can be also understood as a sort of ostracization pressured by the majority onto the minor communities. The safe space therefore becomes a place where some can find solace and comfort by separating from ostracization they might have faced.

The Root Cellar has a double-responsibility. It is not only a place for musical performance since it also has a gender performance quality. Indeed, the LGBTQ performance is happening in the same space as a musical performance. This duality makes it interesting in terms of music because we can wonder which performance controls the other. Would the gender performance be the same if the musical performances were of a different style?

My first hand experience at the Root Cellar was in my freshman year. The year was 2014, and I had an almost tangible curiosity for the music scene at Bard College. I had already gone to SMOG and Manor, which are other spaces where music performances take place and where parties are held. The Root Cellar distinguished itself then by its setting, and after four years its setting is still the same. By “setting” I mean that the space itself is not excessively big, the dim lights make it look like a den, the pictures and paint on the walls are the proof that many before you have been here, the questionable sound system reminds you that you are in an unprofessional space, and the performers are not elevated by a platform that demarcates the stage. Both the audience and the performer stand on the same floor as they play their respective roles in the performance. The said “roles” can be understood as the performer providing the music, and the audience listening to that music. This definition of ‘roles’ is simplistic, but it gives an idea of the dynamics that can be found at a music performance. At the root cellar, both parties --the performer and the audience-- play their respective roles on the floor that they share.

Sharing seems to be a highlighted concept at the Root Cellar. As I mentioned before, the walls are covered in paint, pictures, signatures, scraps of words, and other artistic ways of expression. The walls are free for anybody to write, draw, glue, and paint on. You have a space to express yourself freely as long as you don’t disrupt somebody else’s freedom. It is in some way a space where “sharing” must happen respectfully. The floors shared by the audience and the performers are shared with respect in the sense that the audience knows that they have to stand at least five feet away from the performers. Would the audience stand too close to the performer, the “roles” would become blurry, as the division of roles would not be respected. There is an inherent awareness of “roles” at the Root Cellar that is demonstrated by the fact that the audience stands away from the performers. The audience could simply get closer. The floor

isn't the limit as there is no tangible stage. However, there is an imagined stage. Every person, whether performer or part of the audience, contributes to the formation of this "imagined stage". There are no signs on the wall that say, "KEEP FIVE FEET AWAY FROM PERFORMERS". There are no definite rules as to where the audience should be and where the performers should be. If the performers wanted to play in the middle of the room, they could. The rules that are self-imposed, and could come from an internalized social understanding. In order to make the performance as successful as possible, it seems like everybody gave social consent, without a word, to build a wall of people five feet away from the performers.

Similar to Emile Durkheim's work on the division of labor, a performance at the Root Cellar is an organism where each person is a part of the machine and plays their respective part in order to optimize the performance success. The musician embodies the performer and puts themselves behind a microphone or instrument that will symbolize their "role", which is to play music in a performativity way that differentiates them from the other people. On the other hand, the audience's role is to listen. The audience has to perform listening. Thus the audience too, in its own way, performs the role of an audience, which is to perform. The Root Cellar is a good place to demonstrate an audience performance. Surely the musicians will do their part and play music, but the audience will perform too by placing themselves away from the musician and setting the difference between the listener and the player. Therefore, there are somehow formalities at the Root Cellar. It is not just a place of self-expression; it is a place of self-expression with boundaries. It is not a typical music venue, but it does still use the blueprint of a conventional music venue, as there is a clear demarcation between the performer and the audience.

Among the conventional way the performer and audience are placed, the space within itself has a story to tell that can be sensed from the deformed couches, the broken chairs, the pile of unnecessary boxes, and the shelves full of books. The floors' cleanliness is doubtful but apparently not bothersome to the crowds that sit on the floor as they come in, leave their coat on it and get it back slightly dustier. The Christmas lights hanging from the walls light up the space just enough for you to know where you are walking. The atmosphere is brimming with creativity despite disorganization and dirt.

In that entire relatively chaotic environment, the space is said to be a "safe space". More than just what meets the eye, the values of the space are far from chaotic. This space calls upon one for respect, tolerance, and at least a little bit of open-mindedness. Looking at how the people interact with each other, there is an unspoken agreement to make sure everyone feels comfortable. However, judging by the lack of diversity of the crowd (mostly white), there might be something about the Root Cellar that is specific to the kind of people that attend its events. If this space is judged comfortable for one group of people, it also seems to be a space of discomfort for others. The performances seem to attract Freshmen students, maybe because they are looking for some excitement on campus and are still experimenting with different spaces. The performances also seem to attract groups of friends of the one/ones performing. This demonstrates support, which is one of the things the Root Cellar does best. Indeed, the Root Cellar audience is very supportive of any person performing. If the sound system fails, the performer will apologize (even if it is not their fault) and the audience will cheer in support of the performer. It makes that awkward moment—where no one knows if technical issues are going to be solved or not—easier.

It is hard to say if people come solely for the music there alone from their own volition without knowing anybody there. It is true that some come listen to their friends play, however the process by which the bands that performs are chosen isn't a completely democratic process. Indeed, you (whoever you are as long as you are a Bardian or are a performer) can simply contact the head of the Root Cellar and request for a specific band to come to Annandale-on-Hudson to perform. The Root Cellar does have a budget so requesting for "Bruno Mars" would most probably be financially impossible. However, a lot of "niche" bands come to the Root Cellar to perform.

The Root Cellar also has amateur sound system; playing a recording on two speakers at the same time seems to be challenging. Personally, I think sometimes the music is too loud; and sometimes, it is not loud enough. Sometimes, you can hear the singer perfectly, and sometimes, you can't hear the singer at all. It varies from artists to artists. They all show different tolerance levels to bad sounding. There is a sound engineer but there is not much he can do if the material is shit. Each artist thus has to compromise: maybe they won't get perfect sound, but at least they get a chance to perform. Never yet have I seen an artist leave stage because of the sound quality. Will it ever happen? Probably not. The people who come and play are not fully professionals. The root cellar is a "blotchy space". Not everything is perfect. There is never enough space when a lot of people come and sometimes you will have to sit on the ground if you want to sit because the chairs are already taken. But people still come, and that is because it has its charm. Judging by its philosophy, the fact that it is a safe space for the LGBTQ community is its charm.

As I was testing my hypothesis of musical preferences and class culture at the Root Cellar, I decided to include focus groups, which I have mentioned earlier in my Introduction. From the focus group, I was hoping to start a conversation on likes and dislikes about carefully

chosen songs. In total, there were eight. Each song had a singular quality that is of being the archetypal song of the musical genre it belonged to. As the maestro of my focus group, I was criticized for the songs that I had picked as a participant said that most songs weren't close enough to the musical genres they were supposed to represent, saying that it was a bad version of a genre that could be good. The way I selected these songs was by picking the ones that are not that well known by the masses but still retain that specific style/coloring that echoes the musical genres they belong to.

While there is a multitude of musical genres, this research only focuses on eight musical genres: Classical music, Indie Rock music, Classic Soul music, Classic Country music, (Smooth) Jazz music, and finally Rap music. After playing each song, representative of the defined musical genres, for about a minute--or at least until the bridge--I would pause it and ask my group what they thought of it. I should point out that when somebody really absolutely hated or adored a song, they would be extremely engaged in conveying their content or discontent.

Classical: Beethoven – Second Movement of Le Pathétique (1799)

Indie Rock: Hop Along – Tibetan Pop Stars (2012)

Classic Soul: Sam Cooke – Frankie and Johnny (1964)

Classic Country: George Jones – He Stopped Loving Her Today (1980)

(Smooth) Jazz: Kenny G – Moonlight (1996)

Rap: Mykki Blanco – Coke White, Starlight (2015)

The focus group had for goal to highlight omnivorousness by asking participants whether they liked the song that played or not. I had four focus groups, the size varied from 2 people to 3. The dynamic of the groups fueled each participant to show musical literacy (Bickford 2017).

When one participant had a hard time describing a their impression of a song, another participant would jump in in order to help them in their thinking process.

For each session, the focus group was dynamic and I could tell the participants were very engaged in the discussion. They had a lot to say about music. I thought every comment was constructive. This was also to me the proof that everyone is musical. They had to listen to music and construct a thought around what they had just listened to. It wasn't for my project that they were engaged; they just enjoyed talking about what they liked and disliked. I think this reveals a lot about how comfortable they were with sharing their tastes. Therefore, I made the assumption that sharing likes and dislikes in music might not be as influenced by seeking other's agreement (Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 1987[1790]). Participants weren't shy about what they liked or disliked and there was no blunt or explicit judgmental commentaries about someone's opinion. Because of how Bourdieu depicts musical legitimacy in his time and older times, as it once was during Bourdieu's time, my focus group felt very different from what Bourdieu had been describing about class; indeed, it actually seems like taste doesn't have to be completely determinant of one's class culture anymore. Like Carl Wilson (2014) points out, if a person studies taste, then they need to look at the culture of the region, in addition to their class, race and gender. This is extremely important relating to my project as the researched site, that is the Root Cellar, is a very specific location on campus for what it reflects but is also part of a very specific location, which is Bard College. To every institution is a specific philosophy (or mentality) that pours out.

3.1 Classical Music: “Dead White People Music”

I started the session by playing Beethoven. Overall, I was surprised that participants expressed little emotional response to this piece of music. They all identified the musical genre properly, not that it was asked of them to do. However, it did demonstrate how *hegemonic*⁷ classical music is. Sometimes people can mislabel a musical genre; for instance, is Bon Jovi’s *Livin’ On A Prayer* song metal or rock (or both)? It is sometimes hard to put a song in a specific category; but, there is no problem of that sort with classical music, as if classical music was part of this “other”, as if it wasn’t created on the same planet we live on today and so easy to define. Some participants actually guessed who it was, proudly asking “Is this Beethoven?” and I thought that was impressive.

Listing specific genres was predominantly a male phenomenon, which could possibly relate back to album collecting as a male phenomenon, and the importance of specific knowledges within that field (Straw). The male respondents clearly felt more of a need to display their knowledge about music and musical genres, whereas females were more likely to say they enjoyed everything, or mentioned specific artists and bands. (Avdeeff, 2012: 274)

The participants, who guessed who it the artist was, admitted that they had some ‘classical music experience’. One participant is an opera singer, and the other had played the piano in a conservatory during his childhood. They do not have the same household income; they were not in the same class (one had already graduated); they do have the same sexual identity and the same gender (male), but they do not share any of the key social determinants that Bourdieu uses. However, in terms of musical knowledge I thought that it was interesting to talk to people who could tell you what kind of genre is playing.

⁷ The way that I am using the word *Hegemonic* is to imply that when it comes to recognizing classical music, people know almost instinctively whether it is or not because, this genre has certain components to it that make it extremely explicit that it is classical music. Also I mean *Hegemonic* in the sense that it is a musical genre with a recognized historical power. It is a genre that hasn’t been lost in time, and it is still listened to after so many centuries have passed. Therefore, classical music is hegemonic in the sense that it is extremely easy to notice that a piece of music is classical, and it has a certain historical weight that could explain why we can so easily decipher if a song is classical or not.

The Beethoven piece was described by a participant as lacking ‘instruments’, lacking ‘faster pace’, and sounded like something they had already heard before with a ‘weighing sadness to it’. Some participants said it was relaxing, and had the virtue of calming them down. What was interesting, more than understanding that every participant agreed that it is calming and pleasantly relaxing, was that most of the participants listened to it carefully and then classified it as “background music”. The peak of the classical music era is indeed behind us, in the background time-wise; however, the classical music itself is also treated as “background” by most of the participants. Participants said they would listen to it as background music, as they are “cleaning their room” to quote Nick; one participant said it sounded like “elevator music” or “dentist’s office music”.

When it came to their opinions on the song in terms of its historical significance, some of them did see it as really far from them in time. Some other participants did not think of how old it was because they did not like the Beethoven piece in the first place. When I revealed the artist, participants would pay more attention to the piece, but only to be deceived even more. One participant, June, made the distinction between the Riot Girls and the classical music piece by saying “I would think about historical context with the Riot Girl movement, where it matters so much to know the history in order to like really appreciate the lyrics and the belting and the screaming; but, with this I don’t really care about the history, or where to place it, maybe because I don’t like it.” This proves that in order to know even the most minimum information about certain songs, one needs to be somehow invested taste-wise. As they were commenting on the classical music piece, the word “aristocracy” came up; the image of classical music still resonates as somehow elitists. The fame and glory attributed to Beethoven in the Western world made the participants listen more closely to the music piece as I played the rest of the song. It

was as if they were acting ‘serious’ for a ‘serious’ artist. They fell in discontent after still finding the song not particularly entertaining or enticing. It is as if there is a temporal/generational gap. People used to put on their best outfit to go to a classical music concert back in the 17th century; all these rituals were part of the entertainment. However, nowadays it is as if classical music isn’t attractive in the entertaining sense, and it doesn’t trigger bodily response.

The emotional response to Beethoven was neutral; one participant said that they did not have an emotional response probably because “it is one of those objectively good pieces of music”, so there was no particular fondness of it or hate against it. It was not transcending; it was “mellow”, it was “somber”. The mellowness of the song actually stressed out some participants. In addition, a participant pointed out that it was “dead white people music”. This refers to the known western history classical music holds. In fact, when Bourdieu talks about the elite listening to classical music, even if he doesn’t mention race, we can easily assume he is talking about the white people part of the elite.

3.2 Indie Rock Music: “DIY Social Music For White Folks”

Absolutely all the participants enjoyed Hop Along. One participant thought this song from Hop Along would be a good “On the Road” song, or a song they would listen to if they were “in a bad mood wanting to listen to something cathartic while preparing dinner after coming back from class”. Something about Hop Along had this *je ne sais quoi* to it that made participants want to the lyrics and the other songs the band plays. Another participant agreed it was like “angry music”, judging from the instrumental composition, and the singer added to that anger with her “weird voice” as if “she needed to let off steam”, Nikolai said. Hop Along, “fun to sing along?!” That is the reaction participants had. Some participants, who already knew the band and that specific song, actually did sing along. They saw the song as an invitation to

storytelling. Two participants pointed out that it would be preferable to be in a contained environment to sing along to it, like in a car, due to the rushing release of anger that would transpire from singing along.

Three participants pointed out how the beginning of the song made it hard to decipher how it was going to/what the melody was going to be. They were all happily surprised to hear the way it turned out, with the singer and her “iconic” voice as well as the “sweet” ambiance it installed. They also mentioned how it could have been heavy metal, because the beginning of the song was misleading and it was actually exactly because they were misled that they enjoyed the song even more.

After expressing whether they liked or disliked the song, all the participants pointed out how similar it is to songs one could hear at The Root Cellar. I should mention that the band Hop Along had already played at the Root Cellar before, which means some participants would say: “You know they played at the Root Cellar?” with a pleasantly surprised tone. After all, Hop Along did have that indie rock quality that the Root Cellar looked so often in a band. Henceforth, it seems like the participants’ taste were very much in tune with the Root Cellar’s collection. According to Nadine Hubbs, liking rock is not meaningless as “the probability of liking rock increases with educational attainment.” (2014:93) Since the Root Cellar is on a college campus and that most of the attendees are students, the fact that all participants liked Hop Along reflects their own educational attainment. In addition, Indie Rock music might have a positive social insinuation for participants. “Originality is also, arguably, the supreme principle in rock music” and can satisfy the desires of exceptionalism and novelty that contemporary Americans look for (ibid: 97).

Moreover, Flora brought up the socio-economic aspect as she said, “you don’t have to pay a lot to get in to a Hop Along show in general. The kind of people who would be most easily exposed to this music would be college students who could afford to go to Bard with little personal wallets but maybe larger parental wallets.” This can be related to the idea of a “DIY band” which is what Stanley called Hop Along. It is a band that does everything on their own, where there isn’t any big production team behind them in order to commercialize their music. Therefore, there isn’t a huge emphasis on monetary capital or how to make their song appeal to all kinds of crowd, instead the emphasis is put on the art. “The people in the band are white people so it might immediately think of their crowd as being a lot of white people but not exclusively; it probably appeals to a lot of white folks” said Stanley. He is right. The audience at the Root Cellar is majoritarilly white, and bringing this band to the Root Cellar seems to reproduce whiteness.

3.3 Classic Soul Music: “Hidden Gem”

Moving on from Indie Rock to Classic Soul, I played Sam Cooke. Almost like stuck in its time, the ‘age’ of the song stood out as participants said that it was “part of a certain time”. On of the participants, Flora said, “someone of an older generation would listen to that kind of song” as in to insinuate that music genres are dependent of generations. Most participants liked it; some really liked the ‘big band’ quality it had. It was one of these songs that almost anyone can appreciate without having to be fully invested in it. However, when I asked them if it would play at the Root Cellar, participants said no. Why is it that a music that is easily approachable by anyone can’t play at the Root Cellar? The Root Cellar’s musical identity seems to only take the form on Rock music. Apart from rock, nothing in terms of music really has a place there.

Participants' reaction to the song was neutral; they neither liked it nor disliked it. They thought the ambient sound was nice and would be a great song to put in the background at a dinner party. Again, they wouldn't choose this song if they were by themselves. When I asked them if they listened to that music genre, only four said they did sometimes.

I wonder why their reactions were so neutral. Was it because of how old the song was? Or was it because Soul music is predominantly a music that comes from black culture and the participants were all white (except one)? Or was it because of both? These participants mostly grew up in with white culture which could explain why they are not as acclimated to songs associated with a different century and a different race than theirs.

3.4 Classic Country Music: "Please, ANYTHING ELSE!"

It was very exciting to move on to country music as I was thinking of Nadine Hubbs' book about *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*. How were people from the Root Cellar going to react to a musical genre that has been tagged with labels of white, conservative, straight, racist and bigot? Speaking to people who came from an LGBTQ safe space/music venue about this music was fascinating.

One participant, June, found that this song had "country-ish vibe" implying the song isn't fully representative of the music genres it belongs to. She was one of the few who had a soft spot for country music. I was surprised that she did not say "I like country music"; instead, she said that she had a 'soft spot for it' while looking down at the floor, as if it were some kind of guilty pleasure. Country music seems to shake up people in such a way that all their reactions will be stronger. In fact, Ivy, one of the participants had the strongest reaction, her reaction came in spasms like she was having a cockroach crawl up on her sleeve (Wilson, 2014: 3). She said,

“I can’t do country, I just can’t. If it weren’t for this context I would ask to change it; I know upstate New York likes country music but I need to change it; also, my housemates love country and I just can’t listen to it with them. I tried to like Shania Twain, but I don’t and they hate me and respect me for that. Every country archetype, I don’t like. His voice, OMG, hate it. I just want to scream CHANGE IT please, get me out of here.”

Judging by her dramatic reaction, and keeping in mind Nadine Hubbs’ book about country music and its ethical stereotypes; I asked if her dislike came from the aesthetic of said genre. She answered: “I don’t know, I have to think about that; you see I imagine a **white man with a flannel sitting on a log with his guitar**. I guess I am just averse to it because of the **lifestyle it portrays**.”

What country music reflects socially can trigger aversion to it. Rural, working class, white supremacist values are associated with country music (Hubbs, 2014) at the expense of its aesthetic qualities. At this point, it seems like country music is treated the way some people treat a person with a bad reputation. Instead of finding out for themselves if the person is really bad, they turn a blind eye because of the reputation that precedes said person.

Similarly, Nick didn’t like the song I played at all. He knew that “country music is super popular” and said that the song was comparable to “the processes that bubblegum pop music goes through: as in you have several writers, it’s really well advertised, people spend millions on producing songs that become huge hits, most of it is just crap because it is really mainstream.” In his book *Let’s Talk About Love*, Carl Wilson also talks about mainstream music as being typically of ‘bad taste’; in addition, Bourdieu who did not particularly appreciate the taste of the masses would agree that mainstream is ‘crap’.

Nick, who thought it was a bad song, said he used to hate country, but he specified he hated it the same way he hates pop music because of connotations associated with it. However, after spending more time with country music, he reconsidered its value saying, “some parts are good

but probably more the older stuff.” This is a demonstration of change in musical taste. Nick has a “taste biography, a narrative of shifting preferences.” (Wilson, 2014: 17) Nick’s relationship to country music was strengthened by musical familiarity. By training his ear to understand and interpret country music, he became more open to appreciating some kinds of country music. If Nick’s tastes were solely determined by social dispositions, he would not be able to appreciate any kind of country music. This proves we need to understand taste as something in motion, something that can evolve and become broader or narrower. Taste is flexible, which means taste is not as self-determined by the class you were born in as Bourdieu claimed.

Bill who did not really listen to country music with the exception of one song called Take me home, Country Roads. The song Billie was talking about is a 1971 country song sang by John Denver. However, the song is also considered pop. This brings us to Nadine Hubbs point about country music that can’t be talked about as folk music; it is a mass mediated pop music.

The stereotypes that came out of the conversation about country music were about patriotism and the demographic that is subject to listening to country music.

Country is a rarity on the American media landscape inasmuch as it addresses working people and their lives, and not for laughs or in an objectifying frame. As a cultural symbol, country music not only sonically evoked a certain type of social persona--usually figured as working-class, white, and provincial--but often stands as proxy for that persona.(Hubbs, 2014:13)

According to Hubbs, if so many participants did not like country music, then it is probably because they don’t identify with what it evokes. Rather than being an aesthetic reason, it is an ethical/cultural one. However, because of that stereotype, Ivy admitted that because of seeing so many American flags in the neighborhood where she lives near Bard, she would assume that they listen to country music too. Is country music listener automatically synonymous with American patriotism? Nadine Hubbs suggests that it is more than patriotism; we have to take into

consideration the level of education since “the probability of liking country music decreases with educational attainment.” (2014:92)

Henry and Nick both want to point out that modern country is a whole other genre and that old country is actually pretty good, and should be removed from the tropes associated with what is now modern country. Blair thought it was “over-produced”.

3.5 (Smooth) Jazz Music: “This Is Sex Garbage”

After talking about tropes around country music and its clichés, we moved on to listen to some much criticized by the media Kenny G. We listened to his “Moonlight” composition. Overall, there was a consensus: “cheesy elevator music or music that plays in an empty fake-nice Italian restaurant” attached to hetero-normative stereotypes where “everything is red, pointing too obviously to sex; there is a girl holding flowers and the man, there is definitely a man, is going to conquer her” says Forest. The ‘smoothness’ of this jazz could actually be re-interpreted as ‘sexual’ jazz, as some participants pointed out how uncomfortable they were from the overwhelming sex vibes coming from the music, “it seems like the kind of music that men would play to seduce a woman” said Billie. The song evoked symbolism of heterosexual behaviors to the participants. The ‘sexiness’, the ‘man seducing the woman’, ‘the man falling in love with a woman’, all these images that participants mentioned all of heterosexuality in common. According to them, this kind of music is an indicator of heterosexuality. The presence of this indicator is so strong that the song is almost dismissed as a joke to Music.

Participants had a hard time taking this song seriously because it is “cheesy” or “too sexy”; Nick thought that if it were to be played, it would be played ironically. “I have really high standards”, said Nikolai talking about smooth jazz. Nikolai was already exposed to Smooth Jazz and had only listened to “the best sax player”, Stan Getz. This reflects the University of

Amsterdam's study (2008) as they found that listening to different kind of music could build a musical competency; therefore, as Nikolai listens to Kenny G, she cannot help but compare it to Stan Getz and build her own analytical judgment of the two saxophone players.

Like other musical genres before this one, (smooth) jazz would not be a genre participants would choose to play. One participant, Ivy, could imagine a family situation where this kind of song would be played as she said: "I can see my dad playing it; we would smoke weed together and then I would enjoy it and appreciate him playing that, but I would also make sure I get to choose the next song. I like it in a cute way; I don't respect it but I don't hate it like country music. The ones that are knowledgeable won't appreciate this." To which Nick replied: "I think it is bad music; it's probably a white guy with a saxophone who like wanted to imitate kenny G or george michael; it is a music that plays in supermarkets and play on late night radio in the middle of nowhere." What Nick refers to as 'bad music' is an argument that is supported by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno as they say that smooth jazz in the style of Kenny G can be placed on a 'Cringe Factor Graph'. They explain aversion to certain kinds of music as being an act of rebellion against the "hegemonization of styles seen in today's country and pop music" (Brenda Gale Beasley, 2005:137).

There, you have it; the music itself might not actually be bad; however, it is what it reflects that seems bad; it is the social insinuation that truly determines if a song is going to be good or bad. This reinforces Immanuel Kant's understanding of taste as the faculty of judging an object by a satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) that is not dependent on any quality of the object itself. The satisfaction is a subjective response to the mere representation of the object. I might even go as far as suggesting that good or bad Taste is no more than a social construct.

3.6 Rap Music: “You Have to Stumble Upon This”

Finally, the last song was rap music. The song I played intrigued participants. It sounds like progressive rap, but then it also has a trance-like rhythm component. It is artistically complicated and interesting for those who are curious. The song is loaded with information which is why some participants said they “would want to be really **actively listening to it**, would want to listen to that and think about the words, and listen to the whole thing all the way through because it changed so many times”. Participants all were in agreement to say that the song is not “mood” music and changes so much that it makes it inconsistent. One participant, June, pointed out that she wouldn’t sing along to the song as she said, “I think it would be more like taking it in, and processing it and I thought it was interesting”. This kind of song requires a specific kind of listening behavior apparently. “You have to listen to it when you are in a mood where you want to be carried on a journey with the artist in comparison to wanting the artist to support whatever mood you are in.” This song requires a type of listening that is less about making the music social, and more about treating the music for its aesthetic, storytelling purpose, almost like Hop Along. The experimental quality of the song charmed some participants. Two of them were really excited at the idea of listening to Mykki Blanco more thoroughly.

A participant brought up the fact that she wouldn’t find it by herself, she would **stumble** upon this kind of song. She added that this is the type of music that can only be performed live and it would work best in a live setting, “just knowing that it is a trans person does change my view and the context a little bit BUT SEEING that would be more impactful”. The song has apparently a performance quality that other songs did not have. Knowing that gender is also a performance, the ambiance of the song might relate to gender performance.

At the end of listening to half of this song from Mikkie Blanco, I would tell each participant how this artist relates to the sexual identity culture that highlights The Root Cellar. Mykkie Blanco goes by both he and she, he is born in drag queen culture, and in fact in the song I played you can clearly hear “They don’t want to see a man in a dress succeed”.

Four participants, different from the ones before, wanted to make it absolutely crystal clear that they liked rap, they listened to rap on the daily, but they really did not like this kind of rap. Experimental rap might still be taboo for the Root Cellar audience.

After I told them about Mykki Blanco’s sexual identity. Nick confessed, “Drag rap is so different, it is not conventional rap; my opinion of the music doesn’t change but my perception on it does.” To which Ivy added, “I think the people who say it would change their perception of the song are afraid of being considered homophobic. I don’t love the song, even after know he is a drag rapper.” Therefore, knowing the sexual identity of an artist doesn’t seem to influence how they think of a song. Most participants, except two, said it wouldn’t change their opinion.

3.7 The Headphone Dilemma

Playing music from your Apple computer can be challenging if you are expecting the sound quality to be irreproachable, especially when you know that apple is not known for having the best speaker and amplifier. During the focus group, participants mentioned how they would prefer listening to the song on headphones. I can insure that it wasn’t specifically because of the computer; it was because of what headphones can do to your listening behavior. I have always wondered why The Root Cellar played their music so loud out of their cheap speakers. In the end, it is not fully because the speakers are so bad, it is also because of the listener. Actively listening might be easier if one uses headphones. The way we have accustomed this listening tool is undoubtedly the reason why we probably don’t listen as actively if there is a speaker in an

open space. A set of headphone is like an invitation to individuality, in the midst of crowded activity. People will treat speakers in an open space differently; one might listen carefully, one might not, and in the end we all have a choice. It is harder to avoid listening with headphones on.

In fact, I have a personal anecdote for that. My step-father—a sound engineer with such knowledge about speakers, and amplifiers, and all that technical sound equipment—bought these huge speakers for the living room with all the equipment necessary to reach aural nirvana every time he plays a song. However, he has recently invested in headphones. He plugs it in, on the machine, sits back and looks completely disconnected from the living room. Before, when he would play the music on the open speakers, the living room itself would be dressed into a certain ambiance. Now, the headphones take the music away from the living room and focus it on one listener. He was actively listening before he owned headphones and he is still actively listening with headphones. However, the headphones have completely individualized him, as he sits in the living room there are so many different things happening in the house. The headphones narrow down the focus to the individual, to this one person. I have nothing against that, but it does seem to have a significant impact on listening behavior, and also behavior in general.

3.8 Listening Behavior: Active versus Passive

In the process of listening to different kinds of songs one of the participants, Nick, talked about active versus passive listening. He wanted to point out the intention behind playing classical music. This point he brought up made me think of Pauline Oliveros and Fred Maus, *A Conversation about Feminism and Music* (1994). In the conversation, Pauline Oliveros says: “Well, I think probably focused aural attention is a very active kind of listening. And it probably takes that kind of listening for highly intellectual musical structures, in order to perceive those

structures that a composer wants to be perceived.” (1994: 182) As she is getting to the core of what active listening is, she doesn’t want us to think that it is like describing to yourself what you are listening. Instead, we need to think of active listening as “the grasp, the ability to perceive the structure as it’s happening” aurally. In relation to the focus group, the participants were asked to do some kind of active listening. The participants had to be aurally attentive to some degree in order to point out what they liked or disliked about the music being played. To some extent, there must be a thin line between active listening (Pauline Oliveros) and deep listening (Judith Becker). Is it to sink yourself in the music? Or is to have some comforting background vibe? Can someone be an active listener in all music genres? If musical omnivorousness is defined as having broad musical tastes and listening to various kinds of music, then does it mean that they are actively listening to all musical genres? Or they hold some musical genres to a higher status by listening actively to them while listening to others musical genres passively (as if they did not deserve concentration)? If omnivorousness truly is about having broader musical tastes, does it mean we treat every kind of music equally?

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants from the Root Cellar

Participants	Ivy	Nikolai	Henry	Billie	Stanley	Nick	Flora	June	Forest	Blair
Gender	F	F	M	F	M	M	F	F	F	F
Sexual Orientation	Gay	Gay	Straight	Straight	Straight	Straight	Bisexual	Straight	Bisexual	Bisexual
Age	22	25	26	20	22	20	20	21	22	22
Place of Living	Tivoli	Tivoli	New York	Bard campus	Tivoli	Tivoli	Tivoli	Red Hook	Red Hook	Red Hook
Job	Student	Student	None	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student	Student
Education Level	Senior BA	Upper-level college	Graduated BA	Freshmen BA	Senior BA	Junior BA	Junior BA	Senior BA	Senior BA	Senior BA
Race/Ethnicity	White	White/Caucasian	White	Asian	White	White	White	White	White	White
Household Income in American dollars	+100,000	50,000-100,000	+100,000	50,000 or below	N/A	50,000 or below	N/A	+100,000	50,000-100,00	50,000-100,000
1*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2*	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
3*	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
4*	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

The Table 1 represents demographic information about the participants. When it comes to

1* Do your parents own a house?

2* Do you have a car?

3* Do you own shares on the stock market?

4* Do you travel to other countries?

It is not that simple to figure out a person's taste from simply looking at the demographic information. It is absolutely undeniable that Bourdieu's model is not entirely valid anymore, or at least is not as inclusive of intersectionality as it should be. We need to take into consideration the fact that the Root Cellar has a niche culture, one where sexual identity and gender are voluntarily highlighted, in order to make sure sexual identities that are in minority on campus have a safe space.

Table 1 shows us that the age range varies from 20 to 26 and that half of the participants from the Root Cellar were heterosexual and the other half weren't. All the participants, except one, were white. These social markers come to no surprise after what I have already witnessed during my ethnographic work. Indeed, as explained before, when it comes to race, the Root Cellar is considered a safe space for a specific community, but is not specifically racially diverse.

This might be explained by the fact the student body at Bard College is not specifically racially/ethnically diverse with 66.8% of white students⁸. Compared to the racial and ethnic composition of the country where there are 76.9% of white people⁹, Bard College is not significantly different in terms of racial and ethnic diversity since the student body composition is close to the national average.

⁸ Includes students reporting more than one race, Data taken from the College Data annual survey 2016.

⁹ Includes people reporting more than one race, Taken from the 2016 United States Census Bureau.

On the other hand, when it comes to gender, Bard College was ranked #15 in the Princeton Review in 2014 for being part of the Top 20 most LGBT Friendly college in the U.S.A. This can support the presence of the LGBTQ safe space. However, do not think that the LGBTQ community at Bard is big. A student, part of the LGBTQ, told me that GLAAD has showed that 10% of undergraduate students are part of the LGBTQ community at Bard College.

In terms of socio-economic status, I asked participants to give the household income instead of individual income knowing that they are students. Out of the ten participants, Blair, Nikolai and Forest said their household's income was between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (middle class); Ivy, Henry, and June said it was more than \$100,000 (upper-class); Billie and Nick said it was \$50,000 or below (lower-class); Stanley and Flora did not know.

Irrelevant of their socio-economic disposition, none were particularly fond of classical music as explained earlier. However, according to Bourdieu, participants of the upper class should have showed more genuine interest towards music that is considered 'highbrow'. No participants showed genuine taste for any music except for the band Hop Along, which was played in order to represent Indie Rock. Therefore, the participants' tastes all seem to meet when the music is in accordance with the Root Cellar's musical identity.

Indeed, it seems like the Root Cellar corresponds to a community that is shaped by processes of descent explained in Kay Kaufman Shelemay as "music moves beyond a role as symbol literally to perform the identity in question and serves early on in the process of community formation to establish, maintain, and reinforce that collective identity" (2011:17).



Picture 3: Performer at the Root Cellar.



Picture 4: Indie Rock Band from Philadelphia performing.



Picture 5: DIY Wall made out of Collage of Scraps from Journals.

“The song choices are mainstream” is what a participant said. What this focus group unveiled is that there is no true omnivorousness if omnivorousness is understood as liking every kind of music. While the songs that were chosen were emblematic of a certain musical genre, it doesn’t mean they were the right choice for the participants. Some participant really liked a musical genre but really disliked the song that I played. The definition of musical genres might not be very helpful in the end. Categorizing music into ‘kinds of’ or ‘genres’ seems to obstruct the fluidity of taste. The song that seemed to be closer to participants taste was the song from Hop Along. Knowing that this band falls into the musical identity of the Root Cellar, it seems like participants have similar attitudes about whether a song is tasteful or not. Some participants said that the Root Cellar was a place for DIY, also known as Do It Yourself, music. This attaches the Root Cellar to the idea of not being overproduced, which could partially explain their sound system and how it is not cutting edge. It also explains the whole aesthetic of the space; the walls

covered in graphittis; the books on broken shelves that you can come to read or take for free; the half broken sofas that were found somewhere nearby and brought to the space as sitting options. Everything about the space screams DIY, just like the music that plays there. It is a safe space that implanted itself on its own in a way, DIY.

CHAPTER 4:*Technology and Access to Music: A Process of Democratization and Popularization*

The population of students at the Root Cellar grew up with unlimited access to the Internet, and this is what this chapter is about. If they don't listen to specific musical genres because they don't like it in general, then it is safe to assume they won't play or listen to these musical genres on the Internet, online, or anywhere purposefully. However, these individual preferences can be challenged by social preferences. For instance, Stanley, one of the participants of the focus groups, said he wouldn't play the classical music piece I played (Beethoven- Le Pathetique) unless he was with the right person to listen to it with. Stanley's comment demonstrates that social contexts can detach you from your individual preferences. What you might not do alone, you might do in a social setting. This can insinuate that we have a social, aesthetic identity and an individual aesthetic identity. This goes back to the plurality of actors in the *habitus* in Chapter 2. *Habitus* can be embodied by one person, but can also have multiple facets that are used according to context and environment.

This chapter is about understanding the relationship between online listening behavioral practices and omnivorousness, as well as questioning the democratization of access to music via its digitization. The way that democratization is understood is in that it focuses on prioritizing access of the general public to forms of high culture (Matarosso and Landry, 1999). The democratization is also reinforced through the digitized music (and online music streaming platforms) as it extends access to cultural contents to mass audiences who do not have ready access to them, because of income or education (Evrard, 1997). This could also be interpreted as the popularization of access to music.

4.1 The Digital Age and the Emergence of Music Streaming

The creation of electronic devices has strongly influenced our lifestyle, and we can notice its effect mainly on the younger generations¹⁰. In fact, in *Technological Engagement and musical eclecticism: An examination of contemporary listening practices* by Melissa Avdeeff, “within the discourse surrounding technology and its relationship with social processes, it is widely acknowledged that technological determinism is problematic in that it implies that technology directly influences society.” (2012: 266) Because of technological advances, trends and practices have changed. For instance, you don’t have to have an alarm clock to set up an alarm to wake up; you can use your phone. Another example? To know if it is cold outside, no need to find a newspaper or turn on the TV, you can check by using the Internet. These are just a few examples. However, these few examples already help us understand the undoubtedly change technological advances provoked in our daily life. The insertion of electronic devices has made certain things more accessible, more convenient, more efficient. In the process of integrating technology into listening practices, I hypothesize for this chapter that listening behaviors have changed as a result of a change in listening practices, where the behaviors are different from the practices.

When it comes to listening to music, there are different ways to do so. Listening to music nowadays can imply using a specific kind of stereophonic¹¹ sound object (loud-speakers, portable speakers, headphones, etc.) or not using any, at a concert for instance. In other words, our listening practices are defined by the space or the object that helps us practice our listening. With the emergence of headsets (headphones, and earphones) and the ability to transport sound with us, our listening behavior is influenced.

¹⁰ Pew Research center shows that 100% of U.S. adults between the age of 18 and 29 own a mobile phone of some sort. For reference, see the ‘Mobile Ownership Demographics’ figure.

¹¹ Stereophonic sound is the method of reproducing sound as if it surrounded you.

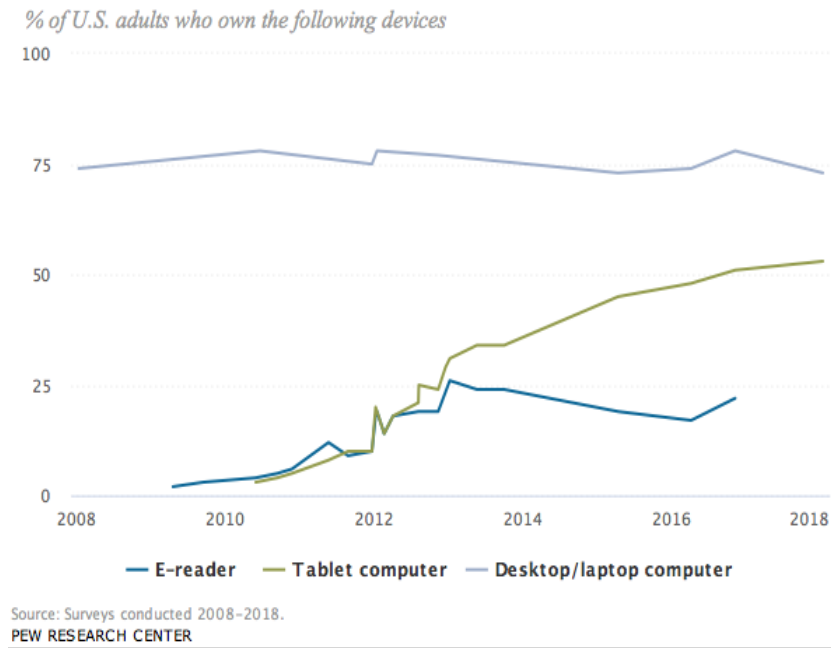
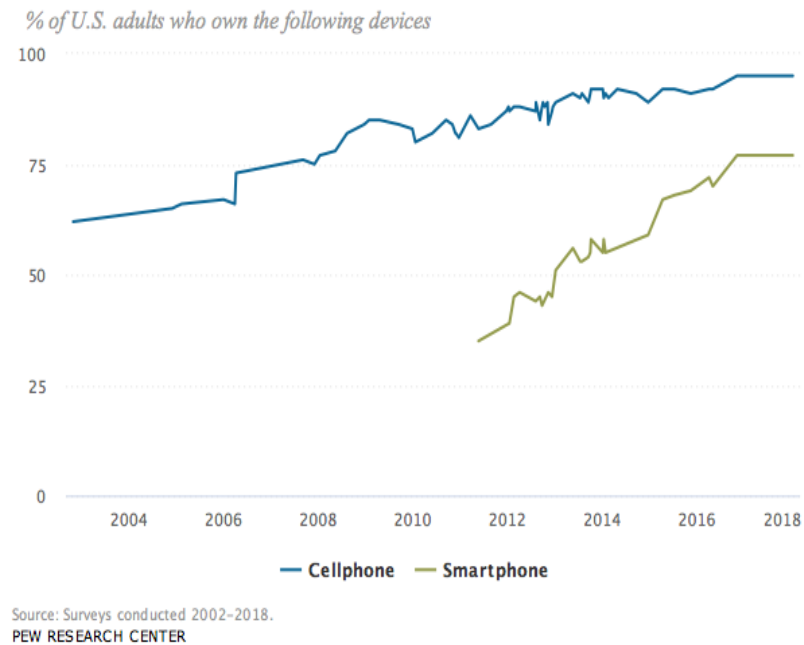
Regarding listening practices, the progress of technology regarding digitized music reinforces our use of headsets (headphones, earphones) because,

While premium subscriptions offer unconstrained access to music streaming, free services typically offer limited mobility in their usage. If streaming enhances product discovery, and if consumers value mobility, then free streaming could stimulate the use of channels that allow mobile consumption. (Luis Aguiar, 2017:1)

To understand the effect of cellphone and computers on access to music, we first need to know how many people are owners of any electronic device that can access the Internet or music platforms. Who has a cell phone? Who has a computer?

The number of people who own a cell phone device is astonishing. According to the Pew Research Center, within more than a decade, mobile ownership has drastically increased in the U.S.A with 62% of adult cell phone owners in 2002 compared to 95% of adult cell phone owners now in 2018. In addition, the Pew Research Center also found through their survey in January 2018 that the percentages of U.S. adults that own a smartphone is now 77%, and 95% have a cellphone. When it comes to desktop and laptop computers, nearly three Americans out of four own one and this percentage has faced minimal variations throughout the decade with 74% of U.S. adults who own a desktop/laptop computer in 2008 compared to 73% in January 2018.

Within a decade, electronic devices have spread. Looking at Figure 1, the line that has the best increase is the one representing desktop and laptop computer ownership over the past ten years. Similarly, Figure 2 represents cellphone and smartphone ownership over the past ten years. We can see that both line are still increasing.

Figure 1: Ownership of E-readers, Tablet/desktop/laptop computer**Figure 2: Ownership of Cellphone and Smartphone**

The demographic distribution of mobile ownership is divided by class, gender, age, education level, income, and geographic in the Pew Research center survey (figure 3). In it, we can see that there is a clear generational marker, which suggests that owning any cell phone is dependent on your age.

The age variable is the one with the most variations concerning the outcome of ownership of cellphone. Indeed, while adults in the U.S. between the age of 18 and 29 all have any cellphone, 85% of adults who are 65 years old and over own any cellphone. This can be explained by the fact that the people of the younger generation are “digital natives.” John Gorham Palfrey used this term in his book *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* as he says, “all of them are “Digital Natives.”¹² They were all born after 1980, when digital social technologies, such as Usenet and bulletin board systems, came online. They all have access to networked digital technologies. And they all have the skills to use those technologies. (Except for the baby— but she’ll learn soon enough.)” (2008:1) This explains the age gap between cellphone owners.

94% of U.S. adults between the age of 18 and 29 have more chances of accessing the Internet with their phones. In fact, when we compare all percentages of ownership of smartphones, the first group to have the highest percentage is the group of 18 to 29 year-olds. The understanding of this chapter is easier if we considered “generation” as a social determinant of cellphone use. In 2018, the people between the age of 18 and 29 years old are called “Millennials.” Millennials are stereotyped as growing up with technology, at least in the U.S.A. We can relate that to what Palfrey calls “digital natives.” The Pew Research makes it evident that

¹² There is no pejorative connotation to the term “digital natives” in how John Palfrey is using it, except the fact that there is the word ‘native’ in it, which is exoticizing and ostracizing. For this research, understand “digital natives” as people born in the technological era and not as an exotic group.

the most significant social category for phone ownership, cell phone or smartphone, is age. Looking at the Pew Research, other categories aren't as strikingly relevant.

Figure 3: Demographic Information of Mobile Owners

% of U.S. adults who own the following devices

	Any cellphone	Smartphone	Cellphone, but not smartphone
Total	95%	77%	17%
Men	95%	80%	16%
Women	94%	75%	19%
Ages 18-29	100%	94%	6%
30-49	98%	89%	9%
50-64	94%	73%	21%
65+	85%	46%	40%
White	94%	77%	17%
Black	98%	75%	23%
Hispanic	97%	77%	20%
Less than high school graduate	90%	57%	33%
High school graduate	92%	69%	24%
Some college	96%	80%	16%
College graduate	97%	91%	6%
Less than \$30,000	92%	67%	25%
\$30,000-\$49,999	98%	82%	15%
\$50,000-\$74,999	98%	83%	15%
\$75,000+	98%	93%	5%
Urban	96%	83%	13%
Suburban	94%	78%	16%
Rural	91%	65%	26%

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

As a result, since the only percentage under 90% of the ownership of any cell phone is for U.S. adults who are 65 years old and above (85%), the access to the Internet via cell phone seems to be affected by age only. The popularization of electronic devices still holds a generational factor, which means not all generations are affected in the same way by technology. Moreover, the popularization of accessing digitized music also holds age as the primary factor. When ‘free,’ ‘unethical,’ and ‘illegal’ were synonymous, before multiple platforms were created to make digitized music legal, music production companies held were monopolistic. For economical reasons, it seems like age is a “key antecedent of illegal music consumption” (Weijters et al. 2014:537). Age is not only a key factor for mobile ownership, but is also a key factor for accessing music by any internet-based technological means.

With the spread of computers (2002) and smartphones (2011), the chances of accessing music are higher with easier access to the Internet. According to Steven Feld in *A Sweet Lullaby for World Music*,

Our era is increasingly dominated by fantasies and realizations of sonic virtuality. Not only does contemporary technology make all musical worlds actually or potentially transportable and hearable in all others, but this transportability is something fewer and fewer people take in any way to be remarkable. (2000:145)

The biggest development of the music industry, yet to be challenged by a new creation, is the creation of music digital streaming platforms that allow complete and instantaneous digital access or only partial access by using a “3 months trial period”. Digitization of music affects our listening behaviors by making music accessible via our phones and other devices. The phone, apart from being a communication tool, is no longer just an MP3 on which you can stock music; it is also a music media device with which you can listen to indulge in listening to songs that you don’t have to buy directly. While the digitization of music benefits those who want to access

music anywhere through technology, the impact of digitization would not benefit music producers (Aguiar and Martens, 2016: 27). The call for democratization of music seemed stronger than music producers since “in the past ‘free’ and ‘illegal’ were nearly synonymous in the music industry, consumers nowadays face a myriad of music platforms with widely different characteristics in terms of business model (advertising supported, fee based, etc.), delivery mode (streaming, downloading, etc.), and others.” (Bert Weijters et al., 2014: 537)

Before legal music streaming, in the blossoming period of digitization of music, peer to peer file sharing software was created such as Napster in 1999, and LimeWire in 2000. People were given the opportunity to download music at no cost with these methods. Indeed, these methods were illegal --which is why LimeWire was discontinued and fined. Napster too faced some copyrighting legal issues and decided to reincarnate themselves into a legal online music store after 2001. Napster’s concept inspired other software and was the pioneer of online streaming and music purchase. The digitization became democratization. The year 2000’s were the ones that made the digitization of music a gateway for consumers to have wider access to music. The only condition was that you had to have an electronic device, and in the case of LimeWire you needed a computer. After LimeWire and peer to peer file sharing, YouTube was created; music streaming companies were created. “The popularization of the world wide web and the rise of mobile music hardware” (ibid, 537) created an entirely new way of listening practices (i.e., listening practices as what we use to listen to music).

To name a few of the companies, there is Spotify, the Swedish music streaming application platform created in 2006, but there is also SoundCloud, the German music streaming website designed in 2007, and Deezer, the French music streaming website and application built in 2007. Universal Music, Sony Music or Warner Music --the three big fish of the music record

label world-- had nothing to do with the emergence of these music sharing and streaming platforms. Streaming platforms like Spotify are aware of how much access they give to their listeners and advertise their brand by letting customers know that the platform will provide them with a service tailored to the customer's taste.

Here is the description of Spotify that you can find in the 'About' section of their website:

"What is Spotify? Spotify brings you the right music for every moment – on computers, mobiles, tablets, home entertainment systems, cars, gaming consoles and more. Just search for music you love, or let Spotify play you something great. Create and listen to your playlists for free or subscribe to Premium for on-demand access at the highest audio quality – with zero ads."

In this case, as Spotify presents their service as more personalized, the emphasis is also put on the mobility of the platform mediated by electronic devices. The access to music in its digital form on the Internet could be considered as a reinforcer of the phenomenon of omnivorousness, since "music consumers are found to substitute CD purchases for unlicensed music consumption, but much of what is consumed illegally would not have been purchased if piracy was not available." (Aguilar and Martens, 2016: 28). I would like to call this process the 'democratization of music' as music no longer is held to a place where it has to be bought to be accessed, or as being part of a system that is faster, a system that is more immediate, where "immediacy is the paradoxical result of a lengthy sequence of mediation." (Hennion, 2001:14)

While "new formats and distribution modes [...] threaten [the recording industry] hegemony in the delivery of recorded music" (Pohlmann, 2000: 57), these new formats and distribution modes also bring forth problems of copyrighting and illegal listening behaviors, insinuating that with the absence of financial restriction, the consumption of music increases. Also, the use of different kinds of music increases, which means people are more omnivorous in

their musical taste. We now know that music consumption has severely increased, and the broader accessibility to music explains it. (Aguilar and Waldfogel, 2016: 1)

As we go further into digital listening practices, and as we are more and more ‘connected’ with our electronic devices to the social media world, we are offered a wide range of musical advertisement and accessibility. The exposure that we have through the Internet to music has drastically changed. Buying a vinyl at the vinyl store is tagged with ‘vintage,’ ‘old-school’ and ‘hipster.’ Music is accessible to anybody who can use an electronic device. If the digital age could be glorified for one thing, aside from being the proof of massive progress regarding research and development, it is that digital device do not discriminate or only to the boundary that is set by the creator.

When it comes to the different kinds of music industries, the growing industries are now the streaming industry, and the live performance industry as “streaming revenues have become an important revenue source in the past years. According to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (2014), revenues from online subscription services exceeded US\$1 billion for the first time in 2013, with the industry deriving 27% of its digital revenues from subscription and ad-supported streaming services, up from 14% in 2011.” (Aguilar and Waldfogel, 2016: 5-6) The IFPI says that streaming now makes up the majority (59%) of digital revenues. For the first time, digital revenues make up 50% of the share of total recorded music industry revenues. The digital form of music has surpassed its physical form of music; which might imply that its quality of mobility motivates the consumption of music.

4.2 Omnivorousness, Technology¹³, and Agency

¹³ When I talk about technology, I understand it as the commodity that makes it possible for music streaming services to exist and be used.

It is thus undeniable that technology is mainly present in our pockets, in our households, in our bags, in the U.S.A. And let's not forget about music! We cannot negate the change in access to music and henceforth the change in listening behavior. In fact, Philippe Coulangeon says in *Social Stratification of Musical Tastes: Questioning the Cultural Legitimacy Model*,

Music is everywhere: at home, in the car, in shops and restaurants. Its pervasive presence in everyday life, intensified by the increase in number of means for diffusing or listening to it due to the development of digital technology, goes hand in hand with diversification of music use from solitary listening to active playing by way of overtly decorative uses (background or mood music). (2003:123)

Technology did not only provide easier access to music, but it also provoked a change in listening behaviors, in fact, “children’s emphasis and interest in the materiality of their devices has implications for understanding their conceptions of sound, music, and circulation, and it de-centers adult values of fidelity in sound recordings.” (Tyler Bickford, 2017: 30) The domesticity assimilated with music listening behavior is not anymore bound to the house; you don’t have to be next to your gramophone anymore. The portability of music changes its rules of consumption; which reinforces Christopher Small’s theory of music as 'social' instead of music as 'individual.' A good example of changes in listening practices can be found in Tyler Bickford’s account of middle school students’ relationship to earphones.

“I never witnessed any HCS students using two headsets at once. Because it would cover up both ears, listening this way would have precluded talk and interaction among the pair of listeners and their proximate friends. With one ear free, kids’ soundscapes were certainly not sealed, and being plugged in together was necessarily a different experience from listening in isolation.” (Bickford, 2017: 71)

Before a person had an individual set of ear-sized speakers, the act of listening happened in an open space. It could not happen as you were walking somewhere. The speakers had to be in particular places (your home, a concert hall, a music shop, etc.). While music seemed open before because music was played in a whole space, it was also mostly collective. However, now

we see individualization in listening practices. In a sea of people, people can individually listen to music on headphones. Jonathan Sterne calls this the “headset culture” (2003). We seem to be assisting to shrinkage in size of musical commodities (going from group size to individual), which can also be understood as the “commodification and collectivization of individualized listening” (Sterne, 2003:155). The MP3 and headset culture built a new cultural model of music that is private listening practices into public spaces (Gay et al.). Listening practices are individualized; before our eyes, we see an “an increasing experience of mediated isolation.” On the other hand, we are also assisting to a widening of musical preferences (musical omnivorousness).

Sterne explains that the headset speaker is central to the development and diffusion of privatizing listening spaces; “the intensely individual, immersive, and private mobile music practices of iPod culture [can be compared to] “hyper post-Fordism”” (Michael Bull, 2008:29). In other words, iPods, MP3s, and headsets are a proof of privatized sound. The behavior towards sound and inclusivity changes as we privatize our listening spaces. Tyler Bickford gives another account of headphones by highlighting the social aspect with which they were used as he says, “headphones, and the portable music players to which they were attached, were intimately embedded in the social interactions of students.” (Bickford, 2017: 66) The sociability of music listeners was dependent on their use of headphones. With headset speakers, a person has agency on how engaged, how sociable, they can be perceived. Therefore, the listening practices, defined by the use of listening commodities, impacts listening behavior. By privatizing listening spaces, the listener restricts the spread of the sound and become the only, exclusive, witness of that sound.

Omnivorousness might not be reflected in the privatization of listening spaces. However, it is an aesthetic model that is marketed for the consumer to think they are extremely inclusive. Indeed, online streaming services advertise omnivorousness. Deezer's slogan ("music lovers at heart, on a mission to help you discover artists that rock your world,") or Spotify's slogan ("makes it easier than ever to discover, manage and share music [...]") make us think of these online streaming services as discovery tools. These online streaming services seem to want to 'give back' the agency of discovering music to the listener. Using these online streaming services, the adoption of Spotify cannibalizes consumption on iTunes and increases overall music consumption, which inevitably fuels omnivorousness (Datta et al. 2017). Results also show that "adopting Spotify leads to an increase in the variety of music consumed and to more discovery of music." (Luis Aguiar, 2017: 3)

If I were to take an example for musical omnivorousness, I would turn to jazz. As we know, music offers the possibility of expressing social differences through the use of different styles. So jazz, as well as other African-American musical tradition, represented lower-status classes in the 1920s and was consumed for entertainment and dancing. However, jazz has now become an aestheticized musical product/genre that is consumed differently (i.e., listened to in intellectual circles). The commodification of music can explain the shift in consumer behavior. Indeed, this commodification (and now digitization) influenced our society's leisure culture while reinforcing the capitalist culture as well. This, in turn, impacted attitudes, such as consumerist attitudes towards aesthetic preferences, aesthetic practices, and aesthetic norms.

This transformation of upper-class cultural attitudes, interpreted generally as a pulling back of the boundaries between social groups drawn by differentiation in esthetic preferences and cultural practices, has offered a foothold to "postmodernity" theses holding that industrial production of symbolic commodities and the arrival of the leisure society was gradually undermining the cultural elites' monopoly over esthetic norm production and value scales, to the

benefit of coexistence of plural judgment scales, i.e., a “democratic invasion” of the art world. (Philippe Coulangeon, 2003: 126)

Also, the rise of omnivorousness is the result of, also known as “taste eclecticism,” a “secondary effect of the structural component of social mobility” (Coulangeon, 2003: 126).

With the coming of industrialization and capitalism, which Alexis de Tocqueville explains in *Democracy in America* as something that also emphasizes equality, the upper-class lifestyle is not as uninformed as it used to be the “rise of taste eclecticism was reinforced by a decline in the role attributed to familiarity with learned or highbrow arts in constructing upper-class identity.” (Coulangeon, 2003: 126) In this sense, there is a profound alteration of the relationship between social position and aesthetic dispositions.

The omnivorousness occurs from the amplified access to music via the Internet, and democratization, “as sonic virtuality is increasingly naturalized, everyone’s musical world will be felt and experienced as both more definite and more vague, specific yet blurred, particular but general, in place and in motion.” (Feld, 2000:145) The democratization of the Internet access is such that the Bourdieusian framework is not as valid as it was before because the possibility for omnivorousness is a backfall. We are witnessing digital natives with Internet proliferation of taste. In fact, Oriel Sullivan and Tally Katz-Gerro contribute to the discussion of omnivorousness by pointing out its relationship to contemporary consumption as they say, “voraciousness is theoretically interpreted in relation to notions of cultural repertoires, to the changing pace of work and leisure in late modernity and to the ‘insatiable’ quality of contemporary consumption.” (2007:123)

The phenomenon of omnivorousness may be more reflected in omnivorous music streaming platforms than in a consumer’s taste. There is a lot to choose from on these music

streaming platforms, but we aren't making these choices. This implies that there is a passiveness in the relationship between consumer and artist, where the music streaming platforms becomes the one in charge of making music discoveries to propose to music consumers. We could compare music streaming platforms as online music curators using "discovery" as an advertising method.

4.3 Musical Passiveness: Filtering and Recommendation Systems on Music Platforms

It is reasonable to assume that the younger generations listen to more of different music genres; it does not mean they are consciously invested in discovering new styles or new artists. The Internet is a vast database where companies such as YouTube, Amazon, Facebook, Spotify, and others will use your previous browsing to know what you want. This model applies to every online music platform.

They and everyday listeners increasingly depend on various online collaborative filtering systems or recommendation systems (e.g., the service at amazon.com that recommends items to the customer) to find what they want. Thus although the cultural importance of taste has a long history in the West, I argue that taste as a faculty in globalized new capitalism has taken on a new importance and, at least in the realm of cultural production, has become newly commodified, both in the new profession of the music supervisor and in the form of recommendation systems. (Timothy D. Taylor, 2013:745)

So far, all readings about omnivorousness have looked at what the listeners listen to; however, no studies show (yet) if an "insatiable" thirst provokes the omnivorousness for consuming more (Oriell Sullivan and Tally Katz-Gerro, 2007:123). This begs us to question the relationship between the values of capitalism and the practice of omnivorousness. On the one hand, we see a system that pushes to consumption; on the other hand, we see a model of musical consumption that pushes to consume all kinds of music.

During my focus groups, the ‘old way’ (the illegal downloading way) versus the ‘new way’ (online music streaming platforms) to listen to digitize music came up. Nick said, “I listen to most of my hip-hop on SoundCloud or Youtube, and that is where I would find this. I love Spotify because they give me great recommendations. I miss the days when I would go on PirateBay and download entire albums, and I would see on iTunes how many albums I had. Spotify does not allow you to save every record you ever had. I don’t know how to find the music that I like anymore.” While Ivy adores Spotify, she did admit that sometimes there will be that one song recommended that isn’t good at all, “this would be one of the crappy recommended songs in my Spotify playlist,” talking about Mikkie Blanco’s rap song.

As a result, technology seems to be dismantling the model of cultural legitimacy and elitism that Bourdieu argued. Namely, technology appears to fuel the broadening of musical taste, also known in Peterson’s language as Omnivorousness. The process by which omnivorousness happens seems to be strongly influenced by the curated playlist that Spotify, or Deezer, or any online music streaming platform, can tailor to your previous researches done online. The ‘Recommended for you’ playlist on music streaming platforms seems to contradict the idea that music listener has more agency. Music listeners have about as much agency in the omnivorousness model as they did in the elitist model. The use of music streaming platforms generates a new level of passiveness in the selection of songs.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION:

Studies have shown that musical tastes are broader than before. While it is hard to bring something new to the table when it comes to discussions of taste; the Root cellar did help to understand the necessity of a new approach for musical taste. Indeed, the younger generation found at the Root Cellar takes pleasure in listening to a variety of musical genres, independent of belonging to a specific class, which contradicts Bourdieu's theory of elitist cultural taste. He firmly bases his argument on what people like; however, the way class culture identity manifests itself isn't based anymore on what people like. Instead, it is based on what is disliked. Understand modern musical tastes means understanding that the dislikes play a stronger role in Taste than the likes Bourdieu focused on. While Bourdieu does mention that likes cannot be detached from dislikes as it is what creates Taste, he does shed more light on what the elitist class would do, instead of what they wouldn't do.

We might like to think of modernity and our contemporary democratic, strongly capitalist world, as a world where borders are more open, and possibilities are broader. In the process of broadening chances, broadening options, broadening possibilities, lifestyles might be impacted as well as practices. The broadening possibilities of access to music can be understood as an after-work of the inclusion of technology in our lives; besides, it can be understood as the democratization of music. While some will talk about the democratization of taste, I contest that concept by proposing that it is only the access to music that is favored; at the same time, tastes and the *habitus* still are strongly tied to where one comes from, and it is not because one can access music that they will wholeheartedly make a choice to listen to it. While Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* had observed the insertion of every aspect of democracy

in the American state as something that not only affected politics but also affected cultural life, the democratization of music is the result of being in a democratic America, according to Tocqueville. He also had observed the duality between "individualism" and "society" which can be witnessed when listeners seclude themselves in their sound bubble controlled by speakers headset while still being in a crowd. While Alexis de Tocqueville was in no way implying that people would individualize themselves in social settings, the concept of "individuality" and "society" can be understood as prevalent in listening practices.

Drawing on a recent study done by the University of Amsterdam, musical omnivorousness could lead to heightened a musical competency almost as competent as music specialist. *How* music is listened to has drastically changed and has influenced *what* is listened to. Consequently, what we listen to changes, and in turn affects how we listen to music.

We should now ask what one does not listen to instead of what they do listen to. With regards to omnivorousness, it would seem that it has a firm generational explanation that is correlated to the "Digital Native"/Millennial era. The growing eclecticism is not only a result of more access to music and music productions finding a way into one's Spotify playlist, "the results show that music streaming services can serve as a channel of music discovery." (Aguiar, 2017:14). However, what this paper fails to do is propose that growing eclecticism is a result of the growing middle class. This is partially due to the inability to conduct such research at the Root Cellar because preselection happens before attending at this musical safe space. One would have to go to a variety of places if they were to research the relationship between omnivorousness and the middle class.

The Root Cellar culture is attached to the place it belongs to, which is Bard College, and represents a micro-institutional culture that asks us to look at "micro-interactional processes

whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence come into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation." (Annette Lareau, 2003: 597) The Root Cellar is a music venue that helps us take a glimpse at one specific trait, amongst so many others, which define the Bard college culture. The Root Cellar has the relevance of being a safe space. With the kind of music that is played there, it not only promotes a specific musical genre, which my data proves to be mostly Indie and Progressive Rock music, but it also enhances the conception of a kind of LGBTQ audience, whereby the audience can feel physically safe and audibly safe at the same time. To come to the Root Cellar deliberately, one has to understand that it is a space that is marked by an atypical, non-conservative music genre. The different types of rocks that are played come from niche, DIY artists; which is relatable to how niche, how DIY, the Root Cellar is as a music venue.

While its audience seemed to have omnivorous qualities, the focus groups that were conducted resulted in a new understanding of omnivorousness whereby participants did not appreciate all musical genres entirely; therefore, omnivorousness has definite limitations. The Root Cellar itself is not omnivorous. I conducted my research based on finding omnivorousness in a place that does not even reflect musical omnivorousness since only a very select type of music is performed there. While some could find it ironic that I would look for something (omnivorousness) in a place that does not even reflect it, my research shows that the people who go to the Root Cellar do not solely indulge in listening to rock music and its variants. On the contrary, the participants of this research showed genuine interest in different kinds of music, as if the 'cultural legitimacy' that Bourdieu talks about was not explained anymore by liking only one type of music, but instead was explained by liking a lot of different music. The modernization of the aesthetic model has led multiple scholars such as Philippe Coulangéon,

Ercilia García-Álvarez, Tally Katz-Gerro, Jordi López-Sintas, Richard Peterson, and more, to the conclusion that elitism has been replaced with eclecticism. Many factors have influenced that shift, such as new consumption patterns informed by a capitalist economy. Since all the study relating to omnivorousness address Western countries, we need to question whether this phenomenon is global or not. Future studies should look at the aesthetic model of other non-western nations to see if omnivorousness is a worldwide phenomenon or only a phenomenon that touches countries with a specific GDP and a particular system of government, assuming the phenomenon of omnivorousness is related to national economic conditions and democracy.

Also, I want to suggest that the possession of electronic devices is a significant reinforcer for omnivorous musical taste by giving access to online music streaming platforms; it is so easy to access music from an electronic device that even a three-year-old could play something on it. Comparable to the process of democratization, the easy access to music has demystified the idea of being the sole person who could find a rare CD in a record shop. In the digitized music market, if you can find unique music, so can anyone else. It's within everybody's reach, assuming they have an electronic device. Before, one would have gone to a record store to find an authentic audible treasure, to find a "hidden gem" as the participant Flora said. Nowadays, we are confronted to immediacy in access, immediacy in consumption, and this reshapes our understanding of 'the music listener.' We should ask if the immediacy of music consumption destroys, or corrupts, its very nature. This would also mean music might now have a new nature/purpose, which is to be social. This idea was strongly reinforced in my focus groups as they all seemed to want to place the music they listened to in a social setting. This idea, as accurate as it might seem, is conflicting with the concept of individualism hidden behind new listening practices.

Just like tastes have changed from singular (snobs) to plural (omnivorous), our listening behavior has changed too and made us find singularity (individual) in the plurality (the crowd of people), which inevitably reinforces the idea of individualism. We perform our taste out in the open (Antoine Hennion), and therefore we embody our *habitus*. However, to understand the *habitus* in modern days, the way Bourdieu conceptualized it needs to be tweaked, as we need to include technology, along with other factors, into the concept of the *habitus*. Musical taste should be understood as everything that is disliked rather than everything that is liked. Bourdieu said, "tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference." (1984:56).

Following the previous statement, distastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the contemporary practical affirmation of an inevitable difference, which does not inhibit judgment and instead heightens it by finding groups that have similar distastes. The practice of distaste still generates social exclusion; however, contrary to Bourdieu's time, the social exclusion will not be produced because of an elitist aesthetic model.

We should re-conceptualize our understanding of taste taking into account Bernard Lahire's general argument on Bourdieu, which is that the unity of the *habitus* requires analytical procedures that are as alert to possible differences and fractures—or dissonances—in the taste profiles of individuals, groups, or classes as they are to shared tastes and practices. Bourdieu's approach feeds into the construction of ideal-typical class figures which focus disproportionately on activities which, while they might pinpoint the tastes that most specifically distinguish the class concerned in relation to other classes and thus most clearly identify (or dramatize) the relative positioning of classes in social space, are often of quite minor significance in the activities of that class as a whole.

The term 'omnivorousness' itself is problematic as it insinuates that people can like everything, any songs. What this research shows is that it is not true. Omnivorousness has limits (Atkinson 2011; Bennett et al. 2009; Bryson 1996). In the case of my research, participants held true to like the kind of music that is Root Cellar-like; however, some absolutely hated the country song I played and would force themselves to avoid asking to change the music; some really did not appreciate the classical music I played, and the rap song I played was hardly enjoyed by any of the participants. While their disliking of some songs that I play depicts the limits of omnivorousness, the participants were assertive in showing that it was the song that they did not like and not the music genre it is associated with. However, this also shows that even if the participant said they liked a music genre, there are songs within that genre that they won't like. Therefore, omnivorousness within a music genre has limits too.

I wouldn't say my research is the opposite of what Bourdieu theorized almost half a century ago. The way we express taste can change with time, but in the end, Bourdieu was right when he said there was a dominant class and a dominated class. The Root Cellar had a specific crowd that dominantly enjoyed the type of music that played. I think my research would have been even more had I been able to interview everybody who came to the Root Cellar, in that it would have given a clearer idea of what makes the Root Cellar so unique to students apart from the fact that it plays grungy rock music (or as a participant called it, 'emotional rock music'), looks like a mysterious attic and has the virtue of being a safe space. While the Root Cellar doesn't mirror omnivorousness or diversity in music, it helped understand more about the musical identity that can be associated with the LGBTQ community at Bard. However, I wonder if there would be the same kind of crowd at the Root Cellar if it weren't related to an LGBTQ identity.

Also, through Bourdieu's sociology of taste, there is the underlying idea that no individual is indeed the agent of their taste. In that light, can people indeed be the agent of their taste if they are following playlists that have been calculated by a computer-based system? The level of agency in our musical tastes is questionable. Even if Ralph Waldo Emerson describes in *Self-Reliance* that the American character is entirely self-reliant by thinking for oneself, and acting only from the power of individuality, it seems like we are still far from that ideal of an absolute individual agency. In that sense, Bourdieu was right. However, the process by which one doesn't have full agency over their taste has changed as it is now based on technology rather than society.

Based on the research that I did at the Root cellar I find that there is a background of omnivorousness that informs the way that people are making judgments of taste. I also see that the judgments people tend to make are primarily adverse judgments that are associated with social considerations/ affinity and less about aesthetics. Considering omnivorousness as a background condition, musical taste becomes subordinated to other social considerations. It can be speculated that the participants didn't like country music, not because they don't like the sound or the aesthetic, but because of what it represents. This research shows that the social quality of Music (Small 1998) is key to the formation of taste as it is used as cultural and social capital (Bickford 2017).

The finding of this research suggests that music is more social than before; it's not about attending a musical event with a social gathering; now, it plays a role in what you are going to like or dislike based on what it reflects socially. In that sense, omnivorousness could still lead to discrimination by stigmatizing people for liking kinds of music considered controversial. The phenomenon of omnivorousness should be understood just as another form of taste that is

imperfect in the sense that it still has limits. "The Omnivore" is an idealized construction, which, when considered more closely, breaks down into some different omnivore types. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984), this form of taste is just a means to an end, where the end product is to perpetuate and reproduce a group's culture. Also, the quality of someone's omnivorous taste is premised on ways of perceptions, which are themselves nurtured by types of upbringing and primary stages of socialization. The quality of someone's omnivorous taste, whether it is good or bad, is no more than a social construct since it is continually being reshaped by new social experiences.

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